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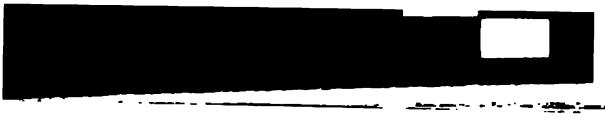

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

VOL. XI

SIDNEY

DE QUINCEY

SHERIDAN

SIDNEY

By J. A. SYMONDS

DE QUINCEY

By DAVID MASSON

SHERIDAN

By Mrs. OLIPHANT

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1895

LELAND

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

BY

J. A. SYMONDS

London:
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1889

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PREFACE

THE chief documents upon which a life of Sir Philip Sidney must be grounded are, at present, his own works in prose and verse, Collins' *Sidney Papers* (2 vols., 1745), Sir Henry Sidney's Letter to Sir Francis Walsingham (*Ulster Journal of Archæology*, Nos. 9–31), Languet's *Latin Letters* (Edinburgh, 1776), Pears' *Correspondence of Languet and Philip Sidney* (London, 1845), Fulke Greville's so-called *Life of Sidney* (1652), the anonymous "Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney," prefixed to old editions of the *Arcadia*, and a considerable mass of memorial writings in prose and verse illustrative of his career. In addition to these sources, which may be called original, we possess a series of modern biographies, each of which deserves mention. These, in their chronological order, are: Dr. Zouch's (1809), Mr. William Gray's (1829), an anonymous *Life and Times of Sir Philip Sidney* (Boston, 1859), Mr. Fox Bourne's (1862), and Mr. Julius Lloyd's (later in 1862). With the American Life I am not acquainted; but the two last require to be particularly noticed. Mr. Fox Bourne's *Memoir of Sir Philip Sidney* combines a careful study of its main subject with an able review of the times. The author's industrious researches in

900 27

State Papers and other MS. collections brought many new facts to light. This book is one upon which all later handlings of the subject will be based, and his deep indebtedness to which every subsequent biographer of Sidney must recognise. Mr. Lloyd's *Life of Sir Philip Sidney* appearing in the same year as Mr. Fox Bourne's, is slighter in substance. It has its own value as a critical and conscientious study of Sidney under several aspects; and in one or two particulars it supplements or corrects the more considerable work of Mr. Bourne. For Sidney's writings Professor Arber's reprint of the *Defence of Poesy*, and Dr. Grosart's edition of the poems in two volumes (The Fuller Worthies' Library, 1873), will be found indispensable.

In composing this sketch I have freely availed myself of all that has been published about Sidney. It has been my object to present the ascertained facts of his brief life, and my own opinions regarding his character and literary works, in as succinct a form as I found possible.

BADENWEILER, *May* 11, 1886.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I — PAGE

LINEAGE, BIRTH, AND BOYHOOD 1

CHAPTER II

FOREIGN TRAVEL 20

CHAPTER III

ENTRANCE INTO COURT-LIFE AND EMBASSY . . . 34

CHAPTER IV

THE FRENCH MATCH AND "THE ARCADIA" . . . 64

CHAPTER V

LIFE AT COURT AGAIN, AND MARRIAGE 95

CHAPTER VI

"ASTROPHEL AND STELLA" 115

CHAPTER VII PAGE

"THE DEFENCE OF POESY" 155

CHAPTER VIII

LAST YEARS AND DEATH 171

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

CHAPTER I

LINEAGE, BIRTH, AND BOYHOOD

SHELLEY, in his memorial poem on the death of Keats, named Sir Philip Sidney among "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown." If this phrase be applicable to Chatterton and Keats, it is certainly, though in a less degree perhaps, true also of Sidney. His best friend and interpreter put on record that "the youth, life, and fortune of this gentleman were, indeed, but sparks of extraordinary greatness in him, which, for want of clear vent, lay concealed, and, in a manner, smothered up." The real difficulty of painting an adequate portrait of Sidney at the present time is that his renown transcends his actual achievement. Neither his poetry nor his prose, nor what is known about his action, quite explains the singular celebrity which he enjoyed in his own life, and the fame which has attended his memory with almost undimmed lustre through three centuries. In an age remarkable for the great deeds of its heroes, no less than for the splendour of its literature, he won and retained a homage which was paid to none of his

contemporaries. All classes concurred in worshipping that marvellous youth, who displayed the choicest gifts of chivalry and scholarship, of bravery and prudence, of creative and deliberative genius, in the consummate harmony of a noble character. The English nation seemed instinctively to recognise in him the impersonation of its manifold ideals. He was beautiful, and of illustrious ancestry,—an accomplished courtier, complete in all the exercises of a cavalier. He was a student, possessed of the new learning which Italy had recently bequeathed to Europe. He was a poet and the "warbler of poetic prose," at a moment when the greater luminaries of the Elizabethan period had scarcely risen above the horizon. Yet his beauty did not betray him into levity or wantonness; his noble blood bred in him neither pride nor presumption. Courtly habits failed to corrupt his rectitude of conduct, or to impair the candour of his utterance. The erudition of the Renaissance left his Protestant simplicity and Christian faith untouched. Literary success made him neither jealous nor conceited; and as the patron and friend of poets, he was even more eminent than as a writer. These varied qualities were so finely blent in his amiable nature that, when Wotton called him "the very essence of congruity," he hit upon the happiest phrase for describing Sidney's charm.

The man, in fact, was greater than his words and actions. His whole life was "a true poem, a composition, and pattern of the best and honourablest things;" and the fascination which he exerted over all who came in contact with him—a fascination which extended to those who only knew him by report—must now, in part at least, be taken upon trust. We cannot hope to present such a

picture of him as shall wholly justify his fame. Personalities so unique as Sidney's exhale a perfume which evanesces when the lamp of life burns out. This the English nation felt when they put on public mourning for his death. They felt that they had lost in Sidney, not only one of their most hopeful gentlemen and bravest soldiers, but something rare and beautiful in human life, which could not be recaptured,—which could not even be transmitted, save by hearsay, to a future age. The living Euphues of that era (so conscious of its aspirations as yet but partially attained, so apt to idealise its darlings) had perished—just when all men's eyes were turned with certainty of expectation on the coming splendours of his maturity. "The president of nobleness and chivalry" was dead. "That most heroic spirit, the heaven's pride, the glory of our days," had passed away like young Marcellus. Words failed the survivors to express their sense of the world's loss. This they could not utter, because there was something indescribable, incalculable, in the influence his personality had exercised. We, then, who have to deal with meagre records and scanty written remains, must well weigh the sometimes almost incoherent passion which emerges in the threnodies poured out upon his grave. In the grief of Spenser and of Camden, of Fuller and of Jonson, of Constable and Nash, of the Countess of Pembroke and Fulke Greville, as in a glass darkly, we perceive what magic spell it was that drew the men of his own time to love and adore Sidney. The truth is that Sidney, as we now can know him from his deeds and words, is not an eminently engaging or profoundly interesting personage. But, in the mirror of contemporary minds, he shines

with a pure lustre, which the students of his brief biography must always feel to be surrounding him.

Society, in the sixteenth century, bestowed much ingenuity upon the invention of appropriate mottoes and significant emblems. When, therefore, we read that Sir Philip Sidney inscribed his shield with these words *Vix ea nostra voco* ("These things I hardly call our own"), we may take it for a sign that he attached no undue value to noble birth; and, indeed, he makes one of the most respectable persons in his *Arcadia* exclaim: "I am no herald to enquire of men's pedigrees; it sufficeth me if I know their virtues." This might justify his biographers in silence regarding his ancestry, were it not that his connections, both on the father's and the mother's side, were all-important in determining the tenor of his life.

The first Sidney of whom we hear anything came into England with Henry II., and held the office of Chamberlain to that king. His descendant, Nicholas Sidney, married a daughter of Sir William Brandon and aunt of Charles, Duke of Suffolk. Their son, Sir William Sidney, played an important part during the reign of Henry VIII.; he served in the French wars, and commanded the right wing of the English army at Flodden. To him was given the manor of Penshurst in Kent, which has remained in the possession of the Sidneys and their present representatives. On his death in 1554 he left one son and four daughters. The eldest of these daughters was ancestress of Lord Bolingbroke. From the marriage of the second to Sir James Harrington descended, by female alliances, the great house of Montagu and the families of North and Noel. Through the marriage of

the third with Sir William Fitz-William, Lord Byron laid claim to a drop of Sidney blood. The fourth, who was the wife of Thomas Ratcliffe, Earl of Sussex, dying childless, founded Sidney Sussex College at Cambridge. With the only son, Sir Henry Sidney (b. 1529-89), we shall have much to do in the present biography. It is enough now to mention that Henry VIII. chose him for bedfellow and companion to his only son. "I was, by that most famous king," he writes, "put to his sweet son, Prince Edward, my most dear master, prince, and sovereign; my near kinswoman being his only nurse, my father being his chamberlain, my mother his governess, my aunt in such place as among meaner personages is called a dry nurse; for, from the time he left sucking, she continually lay in bed with him, so long as he remained in women's government. As the prince grew in years and discretion so grew I in favour and liking of him." A portion of Hollingshed's Chronicle, contributed by Edward Molineux, long time Sir Henry Sidney's secretary, confirms this statement. "This right famous, renowned, worthy, virtuous, and heroical knight, by father and mother very nobly descended, was from his infancy bred and brought up in the prince's court and in nearness to his person, used familiarly even as a companion." Nothing but Edward VI.'s untimely death prevented Sir Henry Sidney from rising to high dignity and power in the realm. It was in his arms that the king expired in 1553 at Greenwich.

One year before this event Sir Henry had married the Lady Mary Dudley, daughter of Edmund, Viscount De l'Isle and Duke of Northumberland. The Dudleys were themselves of noble extraction, though one of their

ancestors had perished ignobly on the scaffold. Edmund Dudley, grandson of John Lord Dudley, K.G., joined with Sir Richard Empson in those extortions which disgraced the last years of Henry VII.'s reign, and both were executed in the second year of his successor. His son, Sir John Dudley, was afterwards relieved of the attainder, and restored to those honours which he claimed from his mother. His mother, Elizabeth Grey, was heiress of a very ancient house, whose baronies and titles had passed by an almost unexampled series of female successions. The first founder of the family of De l'Isle appears in history during the reign of King John. The last baron of the male blood died in the reign of Richard II., leaving an heiress, who was married to Thomas Lord Berkeley. Their daughter and sole heiress married Richard, Earl of Warwick, and also left an only heiress, who married John Talbot, the great Earl of Shrewsbury. Her eldest son, John Talbot, Baron De l'Isle, created Viscount De l'Isle, left an only daughter, Elizabeth, who was wedded to Sir Edward Grey, created Baron and Viscount De l'Isle. It was the daughter and heiress of this marriage who gave birth to the ambitious and unfortunate Duke of Northumberland. From these dry facts it will be seen that the descendants of Edmund Dudley were not only heirs and representatives of the ancient barony of De l'Isle, but that they also inherited the blood and arms of the illustrious houses of Berkeley, Beauchamp, Talbot, and Grey. When we further remember to what an eminence the Duke of Northumberland climbed, and how his son, the Earl of Leicester, succeeded in restoring the shattered fortunes of the family after that great prince's fall, we can understand

why Sir Henry Sidney used the following language to his brother-in-law upon the occasion of Mary Sidney's betrothal to the Earl of Pembroke:—"I find to my exceeding great comfort the likelihood of a marriage between my Lord of Pembroke and my daughter, which great honour to me, my mean lineage and kin, I attribute to my match in your noble house." Philip Sidney, too, when he was called to defend his uncle Leicester against certain libels, expressed his pride in the connection. "I am a Dudley in blood; that Duke's daughter's son; and do acknowledge, though in all truth I may justly affirm that I am by my father's side of ancient and always well-esteemed and well-matched gentry,—yet I do acknowledge, I say, that my chiefest honour is to be a Dudley."

Philip was born at Penshurst on the 29th of November 1554. At that epoch their alliance with the Dudleys seemed more likely to bring ruin on the Sidneys than new honours. It certainly made their home a house of mourning. Lady Mary Sidney had recently lost her father and her brother Guilford on the scaffold. Another of her brothers, John, Earl of Warwick, after his release from the Tower, took refuge at Penshurst, and died there about a month before his nephew's birth.[1] Sir Henry's loyalty and prudence at this critical time saved the fortunes of his family. He retired to his country seat, taking no part in the Duke of Northumberland's ambitious schemes; and though he was coldly greeted at Mary's Court, the queen confirmed him in the tenure of his offices and honours by a deed of 8th November

[1] Duke of Northumberland, d. 22d August 1553; Lord Guilford Dudley and Lady Jane Grey, 12th February 1554; John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, 21st October 1554.

1554. She also freed his wife from participation in the attainder of her kinsfolk. Their eldest son was christened Philip in compliment to Mary's Spanish consort. It appears that Sir Henry Sidney subsequently gained his sovereign's confidence; for in this reign he was appointed Vice-Treasurer and Controller of the royal revenues in Ireland.

Of Philip's birthplace Ben Jonson has bequeathed to us a description, animated with more of romantic enthusiasm than was common to his muse.

"Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
Of touch[1] or marble, nor canst boast a row
Of polished pillars or a roof of gold:
Thou hast no lantern, whereof tales are told;
Or stair, or courts; but stand'st an ancient pile;
And these, grudged at, are reverenced the while.
Thou joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air,
Of wood, of water; therein art thou fair.
Thou hast thy walks for health as well as sport:
Thy mount, to which thy dryads do resort,
Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made,
Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade;
That taller tree, which of a nut was set,
At his great birth, where all the muses met;
There, in the writhed bark, are cut the names
Of many a Sylvan taken with his flames;
And there the ruddy satyrs oft provoke
The lighter fauns to reach thy lady's oak."

The tree here commemorated by Jonson as having been planted at Sir Philip Sidney's birth, was cut down in 1768, not, however, before it had received additional

[1] *Touch* is a superlative sort of marble, the classic *basanites*. The reference to a *lantern* in the next line but one might pass for a prophecy of Walpole's too famous lantern at Houghton.

fame from Edmund Waller. His Sacharissa was the Lady Dorothea Sidney; and the poet was paying her court at Penshurst when he wrote these lines:

> "Go, boy, and carve this passion on the bark
> Of yonder tree, which stands the sacred mark
> Of noble Sidney's birth."

Jonson expatiates long over the rural charms of Penshurst, which delighted him on many a summer's holiday. He celebrates the pastures by the river, the feeding-grounds of cattle, the well-stocked game preserves, the fish-ponds, and the deer-park, which supplied that hospitable board with all good things in season.

> "The painted partridge lies in every field,
> And for thy mess is willing to be killed;
> And if the high-swol'n Medway fail thy dish
> Thou hast the ponds that pay thee tribute fish,
> Fat aged carps that run into thy net,
> And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat,
> As loth the second draught or cast to stay,
> Officiously at first themselves betray."

Next he turns to the gardens:—

> "Then hath thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,
> Fresh as the air, and new as are the hours;
> The early cherry, with the later plum,
> Fig, grape, and quince, each in his time doth come;
> The blushing apricot and woolly peach,
> Hang on thy walls, that every child may reach."

The trellised walls remind him of the ancient habitation, which, though homely, is venerable, rearing itself among the humbler dwellings of the peasants, with patriarchal rather than despotic dignity.

"And though thy walls be of the country stone,
They're reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan;
There's none that dwell about them wish them down,
But all come in, the farmer and the clown,
And no one empty-handed to salute
Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit.
Some bring a capon, some a rural cake,
Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make
The better cheeses, bring them; or else send
By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend
This way to husbands, and whose baskets bear
An emblem of themselves in plum or pear."

This poem, composed in the days when Philip's brother, Sir Robert Sidney, was master of Penshurst, presents so charming a picture of the old-world home in which Philip was born, and where he passed his boyhood, that I have been fain to linger over it.

Sir Henry Sidney was sent to Ireland in 1556 as Vice-Treasurer and General Governor of the royal revenues in that kingdom. He distinguished himself, soon after his arrival, by repelling an invasion of the Scots in Ulster, and killing James MacConnel, one of their leaders, with his own hand. Next year he was nominated Lord Justice of Ireland; and, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, he obtained the confirmation of his offices. In 1558 the queen nominated him Lord President of Wales, which dignity he held during the rest of his life. It does not exactly appear when he first took the rank of Lord Deputy of Ireland, a title corresponding to that of Lord Lieutenant. But throughout the first seven years of Elizabeth's reign he discharged functions there which were equivalent to the supreme command. In 1564 he received the honour of the Garter, being in-

stalled in the same election with King Charles IX. of France. On this occasion he was styled "The thrice valiant Knight, Deputy of the Realm of Ireland, and President of the Council of Wales." Next year he was again despatched to Ireland with the full title and authority of Lord Deputy.

The administration of Wales obliged Sir Henry Sidney to reside frequently at Ludlow Castle, and this was the reason which determined him to send Philip to school at Shrewsbury. Being the emporium of English commerce with North Wales and Ireland, and the centre of a thriving wool-trade, Shrewsbury had then become a city of importance. The burgesses established there a public school, which flourished under the able direction of Thomas Ashton. From a passage in Ben Jonson's prose works it is clear that the advantages of public school education were well appreciated at that time in England. Writing to a nobleman, who asked him how he might best train up his sons, he says: "I wish them sent to the best school, and a public. They are in more danger in your own family among ill servants than amongst a thousand boys, however immodest. To breed them at home is to breed them in a shade, whereas in a school they have the light and heat of the sun. They are used and accustomed to things and men. When they come forth into the commonwealth, they find nothing new or to seek. They have made their friendships and aids, some to last till their age." One such friend, whose loving help was given to Sidney till death parted them, entered Shrewsbury school together with him on the 19th of November 1574. This was Fulke Greville, a distant relative, and

a boy of exactly the same age. To the sincere attachment which sprang up between them, and strengthened with their growing age, we owe our most valuable information regarding Philip's character and opinions. Fulke Greville survived his friend, became Lord Brooke, and when he died in 1628 the words "Friend to Philip Sidney" were inscribed upon his tomb. From the short biography of his friend, prefixed to a collection of his own works, which was dedicated to Sidney's memory, we obtain a glimpse of the boy while yet at school :—

> "Of his youth I will report no other wonder but this, that though I lived with him, and knew him from a child, yet I never knew him other than a man ; with such staidness of mind, lovely and familiar gravity as carried grace and reverence above greater years. His talk ever of knowledge, and his very play tending to enrich his mind. So as even his teachers found something to observe and learn above that which they had usually read or taught. Which eminence, by nature and industry, made his worthy father style Sir Philip in my hearing (though I unseen) *Lumen familiæ suæ*."

According to our present notions, we do not consider it altogether well if a boy between the ages of ten and fifteen wins praise for exceptional gravity. Yet Fulke Greville does not call Philip bookish ; and we have abundant evidence that, while he was early heedful of nourishing his mind, he showed no less eagerness to train his body in such exercises as might be serviceable to a gentleman, and useful to a soldier. Nevertheless, his friend's admiring eulogy of the lad's deportment indicates what, to the end, remained somewhat chilling in his nature—a certain stiffness, want of impulse—want, perhaps, of salu-

tary humour. He could not take the world lightly—could not act, except in rare moments of anger, without reflection. Such a character is admirable; and youths at our public schools, who remain overgrown boys in their games until they verge on twenty, might well take a leaf from Sidney's book. But we cannot refrain from thinking that just a touch of recklessness would have made him more attractive. We must, however, remember that he was no child of the nineteenth century. He belonged to the age of Burleigh and of Bacon, and the circumstances of his birth forced on him precocity in prudence. Being the heir of Sir Henry Sidney and Lady Mary Dudley, he could not but be early conscious of the serious difficulties which perplexed his parents. Had he not been also conscious of a calling to high things, he would have derogated from his illustrious lineage. His gravity, then, befitted his blood and position in that still feudal epoch, his father's eminent but insecure station, and the tragic fate of his maternal relatives.

A letter written by Sir Henry Sidney to his son, while still at school in Shrewsbury, may here be cited. It helps to show why Philip, even as a boy, was earnest. Sympathetic to his parents, bearing them sincere love, and owing them filial obedience, he doubtless read with veneration, and observed with loyalty, the words of wisdom—wiser than those with which Polonius took farewell of Laertes—dictated for him by the upright and valiant man whom he called father. Long as it is, I shall give it in full; for nothing could better bring before our eyes the ideal of conduct which then ruled English gentlefolk:—

"I have received two letters from you, one written in Latin, the other in French; which I take in good part, and wish you to exercise that practice of learning often; for that will stand you in most stead in that profession of life that you are born to live in. And since this is my first letter that ever I did write to you, I will not that it be all empty of some advices, which my natural care for you provoketh me to wish you to follow, as documents to you in this your tender age. Let your first action be the lifting up of your mind to Almighty God by hearty prayer; and feelingly digest the words you speak in prayer, with continual meditation and thinking of Him to whom you pray and of the matter for which you pray. And use this as an ordinary act, and at an ordinary hour, whereby the time itself shall put you in remembrance to do that which you are accustomed to do in that time. Apply your study to such hours as your discreet master doth assign you, earnestly; and the time I know he will so limit as shall be both sufficient for your learning and safe for your health. And mark the sense and the matter of that you read, as well as the words. So shall you both enrich your tongue with words and your wit with matter; and judgment will grow as years groweth in you. Be humble and obedient to your master, for unless you frame yourself to obey others, yea, and feel in yourself what obedience is, you shall never be able to teach others how to obey you. Be courteous of gesture and affable to all men, with diversity of reverence according to the dignity of the person: there is nothing that winneth so much with so little cost. Use moderate diet, so as after your meal you may find your wit fresher and not duller, and your body more lively and not more heavy. Seldom drink wine, and yet sometimes do, lest being enforced to drink upon the sudden you should find yourself inflamed. Use exercise of body, yet such as is without peril of your joints or bones; it will increase your force and enlarge your breath. Delight to be cleanly, as well in all parts of your body as in your garments: it shall make you grateful in each company, and otherwise loathsome. Give yourself to be merry, for you degenerate from your father if you find not yourself most able in wit and body and to do anything when you be most merry; but let your

mirth be ever void of all scurrility and biting words to any man, for a wound given by a word is oftentimes harder to be cured than that which is given with the sword. Be you rather a hearer and bearer away of other men's talk than a beginner and procurer of speech; otherwise you shall be counted to delight to hear yourself speak. If you hear a wise sentence or an apt phrase commit it to your memory with respect of the circumstance when you shall speak it. Let never oath be heard to come out of your mouth nor word of ribaldry; detest it in others; so shall custom make to yourself a law against it in yourself. Be modest in each assembly; and rather be rebuked of light fellows for maiden-like shamefastness than of your sad friends for pert boldness. Think upon every word that you will speak before you utter it, and remember how nature hath ramparted up, as it were, the tongue with teeth, lips, yea, and hair without the lips, and all betokening reins or bridles for the loose use of that member. Above all things, tell no untruth; no, not in trifles: the custom of it is naughty. And let it not satisfy you that, for a time, the hearers take it for truth; for after it will be known as it is, to your shame; for there cannot be a greater reproach to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar. Study and endeavour yourself to be virtuously occupied, so shall you make such a habit of well-doing in you that you shall not know how to do evil, though you would. Remember, my son, the noble blood you are descended of, by your mother's side; and think that only by virtuous life and good action you may be an ornament to that illustrious family, and otherwise, through vice and sloth you shall be counted *labes generis*, one of the greatest curses that can happen to man. Well, my little Philip, this is enough for me, and too much, I fear, for you. But if I shall find that this light meal of digestion nourisheth anything in the weak stomach of your capacity, I will, as I find the same grow stronger, feed it with tougher food.—Your loving father, so long as you live in the fear of God, H. SIDNEY."

To this epistle Lady Mary Sidney added a postscript, which, if it is less correct in style and weighty with

wise counsel, interests us by its warm and motherly affection.

"Your noble and careful father hath taken pains (with his own hand) to give you in this his letter so wise, so learned, and most requisite precepts for you to follow with a diligent and humble thankful mind, as I will not withdraw your eyes from beholding and reverent honouring the same,—no, not so long time as to read any letter from me; and therefore at this time I will write no other letter than this: and hereby I first bless you with my desire to God to plant in you His grace, and secondarily warn you to have always before the eyes of your mind those excellent counsels of my lord, your dear father, and that you fail not continually once in four or five days to read them over. And for a final leave-taking for this time, see that you show yourself a loving obedient scholar to your good master, and that my lord and I may hear that you profit so in your learning as thereby you may increase our loving care of you, and deserve at his hands the continuance of his great joys, to have him often witness with his own hand the hope he hath in your well-doing.

"Farewell, my little Philip, and once again the Lord bless you.—Your loving mother, MARY SIDNEY."

In those days boys did not wait till they were grown men before they went to college. Sidney left Shrewsbury in 1568, and began residence at Christ Church. He was still in his fourteenth year. There he stayed until some time in 1571, when he quitted Oxford without having taken a degree. In this omission there was nothing singular. His quality rendered bachelorship or mastership of arts indifferent to him; and academical habits were then far freer than in our times. That he studied diligently is, however, certain. The unknown writer named Philophilippus, who prefixed a short essay on "The Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney" to the *Arcadia*, speaks thus in his quaint language of the years

spent at Oxford: "Here an excellent stock met with the choicest grafts; nor could his tutors pour in so fast as he was ready to receive." The Dean of Christ Church, Dr. Thomas Thornton, had it afterwards engraved upon his own tomb at Ledbury that he had been the preceptor of "Philip Sidney, that most noble Knight." We possess few particulars which throw any light upon Sidney's academical career. There is some reason, however, to believe that liberal learning at this period flourished less upon the banks of the Isis than at Cambridge and in our public schools. Bruno, in his account of a visit to Oxford ten years later, introduces us to a set of pompous pedants, steeped in mediæval scholasticism and heavy with the indolence of fat fellowships. Here, however, Sidney made the second great friendship of his youth. It was with Edward Dyer, a man of quality and parts, who claims distinction as an English poet principally by one faultless line: "My mind to me a kingdom is." Sir Edward Dyer and Sir Fulke Greville lived in bonds of closest affection with Sir Philip Sidney through his life, and walked together as pall-bearers at his funeral. That was an age in which friendship easily assumed the accents of passionate love. I may use this occasion to quote verses which Sidney wrote at a later period regarding his two comrades. He had recently returned from Wilton to the Court, and found there both Greville and Dyer.

"My two and I be met,
A blessed happy trinity,
As three most jointly set
In firmest bond of unity.
Join hearts and hands, so let it be;
Make but one mind in bodies three.

"Welcome my two to me,
The number best beloved;
Within the heart you be
In friendship unremoved.
Join hearts and hands, so let it be;
Make but one mind in bodies three."

And again, when tired of the Court, and sighing for the country, he offers up a prayer to Pan, according to the pastoral fashion of the age, in which his two heart's brothers are remembered:—

"Only for my two loves' sake,
In whose love I pleasure take;
Only two do me delight
With their ever-pleasing sight;
Of all men to thee retaining
Grant me with those two remaining."

As poetry these pieces are scarcely worth citation. But they agreeably illustrate their author's capacity for friendship.

It was also from Oxford that Sidney sent the first letter still extant in his writing. This is a somewhat laboured Latin epistle to his uncle Leicester. Elizabeth's favourite had taken his nephew under special protection. It was indeed commonly accepted for certain that, failing legitimate issue, the Earl intended to make Philip his heir. This expectation helps us to understand the singular respect paid him through these years of early manhood. Sir Henry Sidney was far from being a rich man. His duties in Ireland and Wales removed him from the circle of the Court, and his bluntness of speech made him unacceptable to the queen. Philip therefore owed more of his prestige to his uncle than to his father.

At this time Leicester appears to have been negotiating a marriage contract between the lad at Christ Church and Anne Cecil, daughter of Lord Burleigh. Articles had been drawn up. But the matter fell through; the powerful Secretary of State judging that he could make a better match for his girl than with the son of a needy knight, whose expectations of succeeding to Leicester's estate were problematical. Politely but plainly he extricated himself from the engagement, and bestowed Anne upon Edward de Vere, the dissolute and brutal Earl of Oxford. This passage in the life of Sidney is insignificant. That the boy of sixteen could have entertained any strong feeling for his projected bride will hardly admit of belief. One of his biographers, however, notices that about the time when the matter terminated in Anne's betrothal to the Earl of Oxford, Philip fell into bad health. Leicester had to obtain permisson for him to eat flesh in Lent from no less a personage than Doctor Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

CHAPTER II

FOREIGN TRAVEL

It is not the business of Sir Philip Sidney's biographer to discuss Elizabeth's Irish policy at length. Yet his father's position as governor of the island renders some allusion to those affairs indispensable. Sir Henry Sidney was a brave and eminently honest man, the sturdy servant of his sovereign, active in the discharge of his duties, and untainted by corrupt practice. But he cannot be said to have displayed the sagacity of genius in his dealings with the Irish. He carried out instructions like a blunt proconsul—extirpating O'Neil's rebellion, suppressing the Butlers' war, maintaining English interests, and exercising impartial justice. The purity of his administration is beyond all doubt. Instead of enriching himself by arts familiar to viceroys, he spent in each year of his office more than its emoluments were worth, and seriously compromised his private fortune. Instead of making friends at Court he contrived, by his straightforward dealing, to offend the brilliant and subtle Earl of Ormond. While Sir Henry was losing health, money, and the delights of life among the bogs and wastes of Ulster, Ormond remained attached to the queen's person. His beauty and adroit flattery

enabled him to prejudice Elizabeth against her faithful henchman. Broken in health by a painful disease contracted in the hardship of successive campaigns, maddened by his sovereign's recriminations, and disgusted by her parsimony, Sir Henry Sidney returned in 1571 to England. He was now a man of forty-three, with an impaired constitution and a diminished estate. His wife had lost her good looks in the small-pox, which she caught while nursing the queen through an attack of that malady. Of this noble lady, so patient in the many disasters of her troubled life, Fulke Greville writes: "She chose rather to hide herself from the curious eyes of a delicate time than come upon the stage of the world with any manner of disparagement; this mischance of sickness having cast such a veil over her excellent beauty as the modesty of that sex doth many times upon their native and heroical spirits." Neither Sir Henry Sidney nor Lady Mary uttered a word of reproach against their royal mistress. It was Elizabeth's good fortune to be devotedly served by men and women whom she rewarded with ingratitude or niggardly recognition. And on this occasion she removed Sir Henry from his dignity of Lord Deputy, which she transferred to his brother-in-law, Sir William Fitz-William. As a kind of recompense she made him the barren offer of a peerage. The distinction was great, but the Sidneys were not in a position to accept it. A letter, addressed to Lady Mary by Lord Burleigh, explains the difficulty in which they stood. Her husband, she says, is "greatly dismayed with his hard choice, which is presently offered him; as, either to be a baron, now called in the number of many far more able than himself to maintain it

withal, or else, in refusing it, to incur her Highness's displeasure." She points out that the title, without an accompanying grant of land, would be an intolerable burden. Elizabeth had clearly no intention of bestowing estates on the Sidney family; and Lady Mary was forced to beg the secretary's good offices for mitigating the royal anger in the event of Sir Henry's refusal. Of the peerage we hear no more; and it is probable that Elizabeth took the refusal kindly. She had paid the late Deputy for his long service and heavy losses by a compliment, his non-acceptation of which left her with a seat in the House of Lords at her disposal.

After leaving Oxford, Philip passed some months at Ludlow with his father, who continued to be President of Wales. In the spring of 1572 the project of a French match was taken up at Court. Mr. Francis Walsingham, the resident ambassador at Paris, had already opened negotiations on the subject in the previous autumn; and the execution of the Duke of Norfolk for treasonable practice with Mary, Queen of Scots, now rendered Elizabeth's marriage more than ever politically advisable. It was to be regretted that the queen should meditate union with the Duke of Alençon. He was the youngest member of the worthless family of Valois, a Papist, and a man green in years enough to be her son. Yet at this epoch it seemed not wholly impossible that France might still side with the Protestant Powers. Catherine de' Medici, the queen mother, had favoured the Huguenot party for some years; and Charles IX. was scheming the marriage of his sister Margaret with Henry of Navarre. The interests, moreover, of the French Crown were decidedly opposed to

those of Spain. The Earl of Lincoln was, therefore, nominated Ambassador Extraordinary to sound the matter of his queen's contract with a prince of the French blood-royal. Sir Henry Sidney seized this opportunity for sending Philip on the grand tour; and Elizabeth granted licence to "her trusty and well-beloved Philip Sidney, Esq., to go out of England into parts beyond the sea, with three servants and four horses, etc., to remain the space of two years immediately following his departure out of the realm, for the attaining the knowledge of foreign languages." On the 26th of May the expedition left London, Philip carrying a letter from his uncle Leicester to Francis Walsingham. This excellent man, who was destined after some years to become his father-in-law, counted among the best and wisest of English statesmen. He was a man of Sir Henry Sidney's, rather than of Leicester's, stamp; and it is recorded of him, to his honour, that, after a life spent in public service, he died so poor that his funeral had to be conducted at night.

When Lincoln returned to England with advice in favour of Alençon's suit, Philip stayed at Paris. The summer of 1572 was an eventful one in French history. Charles IX. had betrothed his sister, Margaret of Valois, to Henry of Navarre; and the Capital welcomed Catholic and Huguenot nobles, the flower of both parties which divided France, on terms of external courtesy and seeming friendship. Fulke Greville tells us that the king of Navarre was so struck with Philip's excellent disposition that he admitted him to intimacy. At the same time Charles IX., who had been installed Knight of the Garter on the same day as Philip's father, appointed him

Gentleman in Ordinary of his bedchamber. The patent runs as follows: "That considering how great the house of Sidenay was in England, and the rank it had always held near the persons of the kings and queens, their sovereigns, and desiring well and favourably to treat the young Sir Philip Sidenay for the good and commendable knowledge in him, he had retained and received him," etc. On the 9th of August "Baron Sidenay," as he is also described in this document, took the oaths and entered on his new office. His position at the French Court made him to some extent an actor in the ceremonial of Henry's wedding, which took place upon the 18th of August. It will be remembered that Margaret of Navarre had previously been pledged to the Duke of Guise, the ambitious leader of the League, the sworn enemy to Reform, and the almost openly avowed aspirant after the French Crown. Before the altar she refused to speak or bend her head, when asked if she accepted Henry for her husband; and her brother had to take her by the neck and force her into an attitude of assent. Already, then, upon the nuptial morning, ominous clouds began to gather over the political horizon. When the Duke of Guise marched his armed bands into Paris, the situation grew hazardous for the Huguenots. Then followed the attack upon Coligny's life, which exploded like the first cannon shot that preludes a general engagement. Yet the vain rejoicings in celebration of that ill-omened marriage continued for some days; until, when all was ready, on the 24th of August, Paris swam with the blood of Huguenots. Anarchy and murder spread from the Capital to the provinces; and during the seven days and more which followed, it is not known how many

thousands of Protestants perished. In Rome *Te Deums* were sung, and commemorative medals struck. In England the Court went into mourning. The French ambassador, when ordered by his master to explain the reasons of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew to Elizabeth, excused himself from the performance of this duty. His words deserve to be recorded: "I should make myself an accomplice in that terrible business were I to attempt to palliate." The same man has also left a vivid account of his reception at Woodstock when the news arrived. "A gloomy sorrow sat on every face. Silence, as in the dead of night, reigned through all the chambers of the royal apartments. The ladies and courtiers were ranged on each side, all clad in deep mourning; and as I passed them, not one bestowed on me a civil look or made the least return of my salutes."

Philip had taken refuge at the English embassy, and to this circumstance he possibly owed his life. The horrors of St. Bartholomew must, however, have made a terrible impression on his mind; for there was no street in Paris which did not resound with the shrieks of the assassinated, the curses of their butchers, and the sharp ring of musketry. He knew that the king, intoxicated with a sudden blood-thirst, had levelled his harquebuss from that window in the Louvre; he knew that the Duke of Guise had trampled with his heel upon Coligny's naked corpse. It cannot be doubted that the bold and firm opposition which Philip subsequently offered to Elizabeth's French schemes of marriage had its root in the awful experience of those days of carnage.

Early in September Lords Leicester and Burleigh despatched a formal letter from the Privy Council to

Francis Walsingham, requesting him to provide for the safety of young Lord Wharton and Master Philip Sidney by procuring passports in due form, and sending them immediately back to England. It seems, however, that Sir Henry Sidney did not think a return to England necessary in his son's case. Philip left Paris, passed through Lorraine, visited Strasburg, stopped at Heidelberg, and came thence to Frankfort.

It would be interesting to know what social and political impressions the young man, now in his eighteenth year, carried away with him from Paris. Had he learned the essential baseness and phlegmatic wickedness of the Florentine queen-mother? Had he discerned that the king, crazy, misled, and delirious in his freaks and impulses, was yet the truest man of all his miserable breed? Had he taken a right measure of the Duke of Anjou—ghastly, womanish, the phantom of a tyrant; oscillating between Neronian debauchery and hysterical relapses into pietism? And the Duke of Alençon, Elizabeth's frog-faced suitor, had he perceived in him the would-be murderer of his brother, the poisonous traitor, whose innate malignancy justified his sister Margaret in saying that, if fraud and cruelty were banished from the world, he alone would suffice to repeople it with devils? Probably not; for the backward eye of the historian is more penetrative into the realities of character than the broad, clear gaze of a hopeful gentleman upon his travels. We sound the depths revealed to us by centuries of laborious investigation. He only beheld the brilliant, the dramatic, the bewilderingly fantastic outside of French society, as this was displayed in nuptial pomps and tournaments and

massacres before him. Yet he observed enough to make him a firmer patriot a more determined Protestant, and an abhorrer of Italianated Courts. At Frankfort he found a friend, who, having shared the perils of St. Bartholomew, had recently escaped across the Rhine to Germany. This was Hubert Languet, a man whose conversation and correspondence exercised no small influence over the formation of Sidney's character.

Languet was a Frenchman, born in 1518 at Viteaux in Burgundy. He studied the humanities in Italy, and was elected Professor of Civil Law at Padua in 1547. Two years later he made the acquaintance of Melanchthon. Their intercourse ripened into friendship. Languet resigned his professorship in order to be near the man whom he had chosen for his teacher; and under Melanchthon's influence he adopted the reformed religion. From 1550 forwards he was recognised as one of the leading political agents of the Protestant Powers, trusted by princes, and acquainted with the ablest men of that party in France, Holland, and the German States. No one was more competent to guide Sidney through the labyrinth of European intrigues, to unmask the corruption hidden beneath the splendours of the Valois Court, and to instil into his mind those principles of conduct which governed reformed statesmen in those troubled times. They were both staying, as was then the custom, in the house of the printer Wechel at Frankfort. A few years later, Giordano Bruno also sojourned under that hospitable roof, whence he departed on his fatal journey to Venice. The elder man immediately discerned in Sidney a youth of no common quality, and the attachment he conceived for him savoured of romance. We

possess a long series of Latin letters from Languet to his friend, which breathe the tenderest spirit of affection, mingled with wise counsel and ever-watchful thought for the young man's higher interests. It was indeed one of Sidney's singular felicities that he fell so early under the influence of characters like Walsingham and Languet. Together with his father, they helped to correct the bias which he might have taken from his brilliant but untrustworthy uncle Leicester. There must have been something inexplicably attractive in his person and his genius at this time; for the tone of Languet's correspondence can only be matched by that of Shakespeare in the sonnets written for his unknown friend.

Fulke Greville has penned a beautiful description of "this harmony of an humble hearer to an excellent teacher," which grew up between Sidney and Languet at Frankfort; but he is mistaken in saying that the latter threw up all other business for the sake of attending his new-found friend upon his three years' travel. It is true that they went together to Vienna in the summer of 1573. But Sidney visited Hungary alone, and in November crossed the Alps without Languet to Venice. He was accompanied by a gentleman of his own age and station, not very distantly connected with him, named Thomas Coningsby. Two of his attendants, Griffin Madox and Lewis Brysket, are also known to us. The latter writes thus of their journey:

> "Through many a hill and dale,
> Through pleasant woods, and many an unknown way,
> Along the banks of many silver streams
> Thou with him yodest; and with him didst scale
> The craggy rocks of the Alps and Apennine;
> Still with the muses sporting."

One incident of the tour has to be recorded for the light it throws on Sidney's character. An innkeeper contrived to get his bill twice paid; and Sidney finding himself out of pocket, charged Coningsby with having made away with the money. In a letter to Languet he cleared the matter up, and exculpated his travelling companion. But the incident was not greatly to his credit. With all his gravity and suavity of nature, he was apt to yield to temper and to unamiable suspicion. I shall have to revert to this point again.

Since Sidney is now launched, without guide or tutor, upon his Italian travels, it will not be out of place to collect some contemporary opinions regarding the benefit to be derived by Englishmen from Italy. In a fine passage of "The Schoolmaster" Ascham relates a conversation which he had at Windsor with Sir Richard Sackville on this subject. His judgment was that young men lost far more than they gained by an Italian tour. Too many of them returned Papists, or Atheists, experienced in newfangled vices, apt for treason, lying, and every form of swinish debauchery. Taking for his text the well-known proverb, "*Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato*,"—which Sidney, by the way, has translated thus:

> "An Englishman that is Italianate,
> Doth lightly prove a devil incarnate,"—

Ascham preaches an eloqent sermon, with allegories from Plato and Homer, to prove that Italy is but a garden of Circe or an isle of sirens to our northern youth. Parker, Howell, Fuller, Hall, Gabriel Harvey, Marston, Greene, all utter the same note, and use the

same admonishments, proving how very dangerous an Italian tour was reckoned in those days. Sidney, in a remarkable letter to Languet, insists upon the point. He says he wishes the Turks could come to Italy in order to find corruption there: "I am quite sure that this ruinous Italy would so poison the Turks themselves, would so ensnare them in its vile allurements, that they would soon tumble down without being pushed." Venice, in particular, had an evil reputation. There, as Ascham says, he saw in nine days' sojourn "more liberty to sin than ever I heard tell of in our noble city of London in nine years." He admits, however, that while he knows of many who "returned out of Italy worse transformed than ever was any in Circe's court," yet is he acquainted with "divers noble personages and many worthy gentlemen of England, whom all the siren songs of Italy could never untwine from the mast of God's word, nor no enchantment of vanity overturn them from the fear of God and love of honesty." To the former class belonged the Earl of Oxford. Of the latter Philip Sidney was an eminent example. Like the bee which sucks honey from poisonous flowers, he gained only good from the travels which were so pernicious to his fellow-countrymen at large.

His correspondence with Languet was doubtless useful to him, while residing at Venice and Padua. From it we learn something about his studies, which seem at this time to have been chiefly in philosophy and science. Languet urges him not to overwork himself; and he replies: "I am never so little troubled with melancholy as when my mind is employed about something particularly difficult." Languet on another

occasion dissuades him from geometry: "You have too little mirthfulness in your nature, and this is a study which will make you still more grave." He recommends him to devote his time to such things as befit a man of high rank in life, and to prepare himself for the duties of a statesman rather than for the leisure of a literary man. Sidney begs for a copy of Plutarch in Amyot's translation, says he is "learning astronomy and getting a knowledge of music," and is anxious to read the Politics of Aristotle. Meanwhile he frequented the sumptuous houses of the Venetian nobles: "Yet I would rather have one pleasant chat with you, my dear Languet, than enjoy all the magnificent magnificences of these magnificoes." He seems indeed to have been a grave youth. Who his intimate friends were, we do not know. Sarpi was away at Mantua; so it is not likely that he made his acquaintance. We hear, however, much of the young Count Philip Lewis of Hannau.

At Venice Sidney sat for his portrait to Paolo Veronese, and sent the picture afterwards to Languet. What has become of this painting is not known. Possibly it still lies buried in some German collection. Of all the portraits which are supposed to represent Sidney, the best to my mind is one now preserved at Warwick Castle. It is said to have belonged to Fulke Greville, and therefore we may trust its resemblance to the original. John Aubrey, the useful anecdote-monger, tells us that he was "extremely beautiful. He much resembled his sister; but his hair was not red, but a little inclining, namely a dark amber colour. If I were to find a fault in it, methinks 'tis not masculine enough; yet he was a person of great courage." The Warwick Castle portrait answers

very closely to this description, especially in a certain almost girlish delicacy of feature and complexion. That Sidney was indeed beautiful may be taken for granted, since there is considerable concurrence of testimony on this point. The only dissentient I can call to mind is Ben Jonson, who reported that he "was no pleasant man in countenance, his face being spoiled with pimples, and of high blood, and long." But Jonson was only thirteen years of age when Sidney died, and the conversations with Drummond, from which this sentence is quoted, abound in somewhat random statements.

It was natural that a Telemachus of Sidney's stamp should wish to visit Rome before he turned his face northwards. But his Huguenot Mentor, and perhaps also his friends at home, so urgently dissuaded him from exposing his immaturity to the blandishments of the Catholic Calypso, that he prudently refrained. After a short excursion to Genoa, he returned to Venice, crossed the Alps, and was again with Languet at Vienna in July. Here the grave youth, who had set his heart on becoming perfect in all gentle accomplishments, divided his time between discourse on politics and literature, courtly pleasures, and equestrian exercises. In the *Defence of Poesy* he has given us an agreeable picture of his Italian master in horsemanship, the gasconading Pugliano.

The winter of 1574-75 passed away at Vienna. In the spring he attended the Emperor Maximilian to Prague, where he witnessed the opening of the Bohemian Diet. Thence he moved homewards through Dresden, Heidelberg, Strasburg, and Frankfort, reaching London in June. During his absence one of his two sisters,

Ambrozia, had died at Ludlow Castle. The queen took the other, Mary, under special protection, and attached her to her person. A new chapter was now opened in the young man's life. His education being finished, he entered upon the life of Courts.

CHAPTER III

ENTRANCE INTO COURT-LIFE AND EMBASSY

SIDNEY'S prospects as a courtier were excellent. His powerful uncle Leicester, now at the height of royal favour, displayed marked partiality for the handsome youth, who was not unnaturally regarded by the world as his presumptive heir. In July 1575 Philip shared those famous festivities with which the earl entertained Elizabeth at Kenilworth; and when the Court resumed its progress, he attended her Majesty to Chartley Castle. This was the seat of the Earl of Essex, who was then in Ireland. The countess, in his absence, received her royal guest; and here Sidney, for the first time, met the girl with whom his fortunes and his fame were destined to be blended. Lady Penelope Devereux, illustrious in English literature as Sir Philip Sidney's Stella, was now in her thirteenth year; and it is not likely that at this time she made any strong impression on his fancy. Yet we find that soon after the return of Essex from Ireland in the autumn of 1575, he had become intimate with the earl's family. At Durham House, their London residence, he passed long hours during the following winter; and when Essex went again to Ireland as Earl-Marshal in July 1576, Philip

accompanied him. It should here be said that Sir Henry Sidney had been nominated for the third time Lord Deputy in August 1575. Philip's visit was therefore paid to his father; but he made it in company with the man whom he had now come to regard as his future father-in-law. There is little doubt that had Lord Essex lived, the match would have been completed. But the Earl-Marshal died at Dublin on the 21st of September, after a painful illness, which raised some apparently ill-founded suspicions of poison. Philip was in Galway with his father, and Essex sent him this message on his deathbed: "Tell him I sent him nothing, but I wish him well; so well that, if God do move their hearts, I wish that he might match with my daughter. I call him son; he is so wise, virtuous, and godly. If he go on in the course he hath begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as ever England bred." These words are sufficient to prove that Philip's marriage with Penelope was contemplated by her father. That the world expected it appears from a letter of Mr. Edward Waterhouse to Sir Henry Sidney under date 14th November. After first touching upon the bright prospects opened for "the little Earl of Essex," this gentleman proceeds: "and I suppose all the best sort of the English lords, besides, do expect what will become of the treaty between Mr Philip and my Lady Penelope. Truly, my Lord, I must say to your Lordship, as I have said to my Lord of Leicester and Mr. Philip, the breaking off from their match, if the default be on your parts, will turn to more dishonour than can be repaired with any other marriage in England."

What interrupted the execution of this marriage treaty is not certain. Penelope's mother, the widowed Lady Essex, was privately wedded to the Earl of Leicester soon after her first husband's death. The Sidneys were poor. Lady Mary Sidney writes to Lord Burleigh about this time: "My present estate is such by reason of my debts, as I cannot go forward with any honourable course of living." It is remarkable that, so far as we know, she placed but little confidence in her brother Leicester, preferring to appeal in difficulties to a friend like Cecil. Philip was often at a loss to pay his debts. We possess, for instance, the copy of a long bill from his bootmaker which he requests his father's steward to discharge "for the safeguard of his credit." Thus Leicester's marriage, which seriously impaired Philip's prospects, Lady Mary's want of cordiality toward her brother, and the poverty of the Sidneys, may be reckoned among the causes which postponed Penelope's betrothal. It should also here be noticed that Sir Henry Sidney entertained a grudge against the Earl of Essex. Writing to Lord Leicester, he couples Essex with his old enemy the Earl of Ormond, adding that "for that their malice, I take God to record, I could brook nothing of them both." We may therefore conclude that Philip's father was unfavourable to the match. But the chief cause remains to be mentioned. Up to this time the proposed bridegroom felt no lover's liking for the lady. Languet frequently wrote, urging him to marry, and using arguments similar to those which Shakespeare pressed on his "fair friend." Philip's answers show that, unless he was a deep dissembler, he remained heart-free. So time

slipped by. Perhaps he thought that he might always pluck the rose by only asking for it. At any rate he displayed no eagerness, until one morning the news reached him that his Penelope was contracted to a man unworthy of her, Lord Rich. Then suddenly the flame of passion, which had smouldered so obscurely as to be unrecognised by his own heart, burst out into a blaze; and what was worse, he discovered that Penelope too loved him. In the chapter devoted to Sidney's poetry I shall return to this subject. So much, however, had to be said here, in order to present a right conception of his character. For at least four years, between the death of Essex, in September 1576, and Penelope's marriage, which we may place in the spring or summer of 1581, he was aware that her father with his last breath had blessed their union. Yet he never moved a step or showed any eagerness until it was too late. It seems that this grave youth, poet as he was, passionate lover as he undoubtedly became, and hasty as he occasionally showed himself in trifles, had a somewhat politic and sluggish temperament. Fulke Greville recorded that he never was a boy; Languet could chide him for being sad beyond his years; he wrote himself, amid the distractions of Venetian society, that he required hard studies to drive away melancholy. Moreover, he indulged dreams of high and noble ambition. Self-culture, the preparation of his whole nature for some great task in life, occupied his thoughts to the exclusion of a woman's image. This saved him from the faults and follies of his age; but it rendered him cold, until the poet's fire leaped up and kindled a slumbering emotion.

Not love, but the ambition of a statesman, then was Sidney's ruling passion at this time. He had no mind to "sport with Amaryllis in the shade," or even to "meditate the thankless Muse," when work could be done for England and the affairs of Europe called for energetic action. In the spring of 1577 Elizabeth selected him for a mission, which flattered these aspirations. Rodolph of Hapsburg had just succeeded to the imperial throne, and the Elector Palatine had died, leaving two sons, Lewis and John Casimir. She sent Philip to congratulate the emperor and to condole with the bereaved princes. He stipulated that, after performing the ceremonial part of this embassy, he should be permitted to confer with the German Powers upon the best means of maintaining reformed principles and upholding political liberties. Instructions were accordingly drawn up which empowered the youthful envoy to touch upon these points. At the end of February he set out upon his travels, attended by Fulke Greville and by a train of gentlefolk. In the houses where he lodged he caused tablets to be fixed, emblazoned with his arms, under which ran a Latin inscription to this effect: "Of the most illustrous and well-born English gentleman, Philip Sidney, son of the Viceroy of Ireland, nephew of the Earls of Warwick and Leicester, Ambassador from the most Serene Queen of England to the Emperor." This ostentation was not out of harmony with the pompous habits of that age. Yet we may perhaps discern in it Sidney's incapacity to treat his own affairs with lightness. He took himself and all that concerned him *au serieux*; but it must also be observed that he contrived to make others accept him in like manner. As Jonson puts it,

when comparing himself, under the name of Horace, with men of less sterling merit:

> "If they should confidently praise their works,
> In them it would appear inflation;
> Which, in a full and well-digested man,
> Cannot receive that foul abusive name,
> But the fair title of erection."

He first proceeded to Heidelberg, where he failed to find the Elector Lewis, but made acquaintance with the younger prince, his brother Casimir. The palatinate, like many of the petty German states, was torn by religious factions. The last elector had encouraged Calvinism; but his son Lewis was now introducing Lutheran ministers into his dominions. The Calvinists, after enduring considerable hardships, had to emigrate; and many of them took refuge with Prince Casimir. It seems that before he reached Heidelberg, Sidney had been met by Hubert Languet; and this good counsellor attended him through all his German wanderings. They went together to Prague, where the new emperor was holding his Court. Here, even more than at Heidelberg, the English Envoy found matter for serious disquietude. Rodolph had grown up under Catholic influences, and the Jesuits were gaining firm hold upon his capital. Students of history will remember that a Jesuit Father had negotiated the participation of the Emperor Ferdinand in the closing of the Tridentine Council. Austria, under his grandson Rodolph's rule, bid fair to become one of their advanced posts in northern Europe. Sidney meant, so far as in him lay, to shake the prestige of this "extremely Spaniolated" and priest-ridden emperor. It was his intention to harangue in Germany against the "fatal conjunction

of Rome's undermining superstition with the commanding forces of Spain." Fulke Greville has sketched the main line of his argument; but it is hardly probable that he bearded the lion in his den and spoke his mind out before the imperial presence. The substance of the policy he strove to impress upon those German princes who took the Protestant side, and upon all well-wishers to the people, was that the whole strength of their great nation could not save them from the subtle poison which Sarpi styled the Diacatholicon, unless they made a vigorous effort of resistance. Rome, by her insidious arts and undermining engines—by her Jesuits and casuistical sophistications—sapped the social fabric and dissolved the ancestral loyalties of races. Into the dismembered and disintegrated mass marched Spain with her might of arms, her money, her treaties, marriages, and encouragement of sedition. In short, Sidney uttered a prophecy of what happened in the Thirty Years War, that triumph of Jesuitical diplomacy. As a remedy he proposed that all the German Powers who valued national independence, and had a just dread of Spanish encroachment, should "associate by an uniform bond of conscience for the protection of religion and liberty." In other words, he espoused the policy of what was known as the *Fœdus Evangelicum.*

Theoretically, this plan was not only excellent, but also necessary for stemming the advance of those reactionary forces, knit together by bonds of common interest and common enthusiasm, which governed the Counter Reformation. But unfortunately it rested upon no solid basis of practical possibilities. A Protestant Alliance, formed to secure the political and religious objects of the Reforma-

tion in its warfare with Catholicism, had been the cherished scheme of northern statesmen since the days of Henry VIII. The principles of evangelical piety, of national freedom, of progressive thought, and of Teutonic emancipation upon regulated methods, might perhaps have been established, if the Church of England could have combined with the Lutherans of Germany, the Calvinists of Geneva and of France, Sweden, and the Low Countries, in a solid confederation for the defence of civil and religious liberty. But from the outset, putting national jealousies and diplomatic difficulties aside, there existed in the very spirit of Protestantism a power antagonistic to cohesion. Protestantism had its root in critical and sceptical revolt. From the first it assumed forms of bewildering diversity on points of doctrine. Each of its sects passed at an early stage into dogmatism, hardly less stubborn than that of the Catholic Church. It afforded no common or firm groundwork for alliance. Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anglicans, Anabaptists, Hussites, Calvinists, Sacramentarians, Puritans, could not work together for a single end. It has always been thus with the party of progress, the Liberals of world-transforming moments in the march of thought. United by no sanctioned *Credo*, no fixed *Corpus Fidei*, no community of Conservative tradition; owing no allegiance to a spiritual monarch; depending for their being on rebellion against authority and discipline; disputing the fundamental propositions from which organisation has hitherto been expanded,—they cannot act in concert. These men are innovators, scene-shifters, to whom the new scene, as in the plan of God it will appear, is still invisible. They are movers from a fixed

point to a point yet unascertained. Each section into which they crystallise, and where as sects they sterilise, conceives the coming order according to its narrow prejudices. Each sails toward the haven of the future by its own ill-balanced compass, and observes self-chosen stars. The very instinct for change, the very apprehension which sets so-called Reformers in motion, implies individualities of opinion and incompatibilities of will. Therefore they are collectively weak when ranged against the ranks of orthodoxy and established discipline. It is only because the life of the world beats in their hearts and brains, because the onward faces of humanity are with them, that they command our admiration. The victory of liberalism in modern Europe was won at the cost of retrograde movements—such as the extinction of free thought in Italy and Spain, the crushing of the Huguenots in France, the bloody persecution of the Netherlands, the Thirty Years War, and the ossification of the Reformed Churches into inorganic stupidity. And the fruits of the victory fall not to any sect of Protestantism, but to a new spirit which arose in Science and the Revolution. To expect, therefore, as Sidney and the men with whom he sympathised expected, that a Protestant League could be formed, capable of hurling back the tide of Catholic reaction, was little short of the indulgence of a golden dream. Facts and the essence of the Reformation were against its possibility. As a motive force in the world, Protestantism was already well-nigh exhausted. Its energy had already passed into new forms. The men of the future were now represented by philosophers like Bruno and Bacon, by navigators of the world like Drake, by explorers of the

heavens like Galileo, by anatomists and physicists like Vesalius, Servetus, Sarpi, Harvey.

Whatever Sidney's hopes and dreams may have been, the religious discords of Germany, torn asunder by Protestant sectarians and worm-eaten to the core by Jesuitical propagandists, must have rudely disilluded him. And no one was better fitted than Languet to dissect before his eyes the humours and imposthumes of that unwieldy body politic. They left Prague at the end of April, travelled together to Heidelberg, visited the Landgrave of Hesse, and arrived at Cologne in May. Here Sidney thought that he must turn his face immediately homewards, though he greatly wished to pass into Flanders. Languet dissuaded him, on grounds of prudence, from doing so without direct commission from the queen. Great therefore was the satisfaction of both when letters arrived from England, ordering Sidney to compliment William the Silent, Prince of Orange, on the birth of his son. During this visit to the Netherlands he made acquaintance with the two most distinguished men there, and won the respect of both. Don John of Austria, the victor of Lepanto, was then acting as viceroy to the King of Spain. Sidney paid him his respects, and this is the account Fulke Greville gives of his reception :—

"Though at the first, in his Spanish haughture, he (Don John) gave him access as by descent to a youth, of grace as to a stranger, and in particular competition, as he conceived, to an enemy; yet after a while that he had taken his just altitude, he found himself so stricken with this extraordinary planet that the beholders wondered to see what ingenuous tribute that brave and high-minded prince paid to his worth, giving more honour and respect to this

hopeful young gentleman than to the ambassadors of mighty princes."

What happened at Sidney's interview with William of Orange is not told us. That he made a strong impression on the stadtholder appears from words spoken to Fulke Greville after some years. Greville had been sent as ambassador to the prince at Delft. Among other things William bade him report to Queen Elizabeth his opinion "that her Majesty had one of the ripest and greatest counsellors of estate in Sir Philip Sidney that at this day lived in Europe; to the trial of which he was pleased to leave his own credit engaged until her Majesty might please to employ this gentleman either amongst her friends or enemies." Sidney's caution prevented his friend from delivering this message to a sovereign notoriously jealous of foreign interference in her home affairs.

Philip was in London again in June, when he presented his respects to her Majesty at Greenwich. That he had won credit by the discharge of his embassy appears from a letter written by Mr. Secretary Walsingham to Sir Henry Sidney soon after his arrival. "There hath not been any gentleman, I am sure, these many years that hath gone through so honourable a charge with as great commendations as he: in consideration whereof I could not but communicate this part of my joy with your Lordship, being no less a refreshing unto me in these my troublesome businesses than the soil is to the chafed stag." Henceforth we may regard our hero as a courtier high in favour with the queen, esteemed for his solid parts by the foremost statesmen of the realm, in correspondence with the leaders of the Reformed party on the Continent, and surely marked out for some em-

ployment of importance. He had long to wait, however, before that craving for action in the great world which we have already indicated as his leading passion, could even in part be gratified. Meanwhile it was his duty to hang about the Court; and how irksome he found that petty sphere of compliments, intrigues, and gallantries, can be read in the impatient letters he addressed to Languet. Their correspondence was pretty regularly maintained, although the old man sometimes grumbled at his young friend's want of attention. "Weigh well, I beseech you, what it is to grudge through so long a space of time one single hour to friends who love you so dearly, and who are more anxious for you than for themselves. By omitting one dance a month you could have abundantly satisfied us." In this strain Languet writes occasionally. But his frequent reference to Philip's "sweetest letters," and the familiarity he always displays with his private affairs, show that the young courtier was a tolerably regular correspondent. It is difficult for elderly folk, when they have conceived ardent affection for their juniors, to remember how very much more space the young occupy in the thoughts of the old than the old can hope to command in youthful brains distracted by the multifarious traffic of society. Languet had little to do but to ply his pen in his study. Sidney had to follow the queen on progress, trifle with her ladies, join in games of skill and knightly exercises with the gentlemen about the Court. Yet it is certain that this life wearied him. He was for ever seeking to escape; at one time planning to join Prince Casimir in the Low Countries; at another to take part in Frobisher's expedition; and more than once contemplating "some Indian

project." Languet did his best to curb these wandering ambitions. He had conceived a very firm opinion that Sidney was born to be a statesman, not a soldier of fortune, not an explorer of the ocean. At the same time, he greatly dreaded lest his friend should succumb to the allurements of fashionable idleness. "My noble Sidney, you must avoid that persistent siren, sloth." "Think not that God endowed you with parts so excellent to the end that you should let them rot in leisure. Rather hold firmly that He requires more from you than from those to whom He has been less liberal of talents." "There is no reason to fear lest you should decay in idleness if only you will employ your mind; for in so great a realm as England opportunity will surely not be wanting for its useful exercise." "Nature has adorned you with the richest gifts of mind and body; fortune with noble blood and wealth and splendid family connections; and you from your first boyhood have cultivated your intellect by those studies which are most helpful to men in their struggle after virtue. Will you then refuse your energies to your country when it demands them? Will you bury that distinguished talent God has given you?" The career Languet had traced out for Philip was that of a public servant; and he consistently strove to check the young man's restlessness, to overcome his discouragement, and to stimulate him while depressed by the frivolities of daily life. It was his object to keep Philip from roaming or wasting his powers on adventure, while he also fortified his will against the seductions of an idle Court.

During this summer of 1577 Languet once or twice alludes in very cautious language to some project

of great importance which had recently been mooted between them on the Continent. It involved the participation of eminent foreigners. It required the sanction and active assistance of the queen. What this was we do not know. Some of Sidney's biographers are of opinion that it concerned his marriage with a German noblewoman. Others—perhaps with better reason—conjecture that his candidature for the Polish Crown had then been mooted. When Henri III. resigned the throne of Poland for that of France in 1574 Stephen Bathori was elected king. He lived until 1585. But in 1577, the year of Languet's mysterious letters, he had not yet given substantial proof of his future policy; and the Protestant party in Europe might have been glad to secure a nominee of the English queen as candidate in the case of a vacancy. There is no doubt that a belief prevailed after Sidney's death that the crown of Poland had in some sort been offered him. The author of *The Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney* mentions it. Sir Robert Naunton asserts that the queen refused "to further his advancement, not only out of emulation, but out of fear to lose the jewel of her times." Fuller says that Sidney declined the honour, preferring to be "a subject to Queen Elizabeth than a sovereign beyond the seas." It would be far too flattering to Philip to suppose that a simple English gentleman in his twenty-third year received any actual offer of a throne which a king of France had recently vacated, and which was generally given by election to such as could afford to pay dearly for the honour. Yet it is not impossible that the Reformed princes of Germany may have thought him a good pawn to play, if Elizabeth were willing to back

him. The *Fœdus Evangelicum*, it must be remembered, was by no means yet devoid of actuality.

Mary Sidney's recent marriage to the Earl of Pembroke had strengthened the family by an alliance with one of England's chief noblemen. After coming home Philip paid his sister a visit at Wilton, returning, however, soon to Court in order to watch his father's interests. Sir Henry Sidney was still at his post as Lord Deputy of Ireland; and in his absence the usual intrigues were destroying his credit with the queen. Brilliant, unscrupulous, mendacious, Ormond poured calumnies and false insinuations into her ear. She gave the earl too easy credence, partly because he was handsome, and partly because the government of Ireland was always costing money. There seems little doubt that Sir Henry made no pecuniary profit for himself out of his viceroyalty, and that he managed the realm as economically and as justly as was possible. Ormond and the nobles of his party, however, complained that the Lord Deputy decided cases inequitably against them, that his method of government was ruinously expensive, and that he tyrannously exacted from them land-taxes which had been remitted by his predecessors. Philip undertook his father's defence in a written statement, only the rough notes of which, and those imperfect, have come down to us. He met the charge of injustice by challenging the accusers to show evidence. On the question of the land-tax, or cess, which Ormond and others claimed to have remitted, he proved the inequity and the political imprudence of freeing great nobles from burdens which must be paid by the poor. These poor, moreover, were already taxed by their lords, and shamefully ill-treated

by them. "And privileged persons, forsooth, be all the rich men of the pale, the burden only lying upon the poor, who may groan, for their cry cannot be heard." Sir Henry had proposed to convert the cess, computed at an average of ten pounds, into a fixed annual payment of five marks. At this the nobles cried out that they were being robbed. Philip demonstrated that, according to their own showing, a very easy compromise had been offered them. On the head of economy, he was able to make it clear that his father's administration tended to save money to the State, allowing always for the outlay needed by an army in occupation of a turbulent and disaffected country. Such a government as that of Ireland could not be conducted cheaper. But some had urged that the Lord Deputy exceeded measure in the severity of his justice and the cruelty of his executive. Philip contended that a greater lenity than that which his father showed would have been worse than folly. What he wrote upon this point is worthy of careful perusal at the present day. It reminds us that the Irish difficulty has been permanent, and without appreciable alteration, through three centuries. "Little is lenity to prevail in minds so possessed with a natural inconstancy ever to go in a new fortune, with a revengeful hate to all English as to their only conquerors, and that which is most of all, with so ignorant obstinacy in Papistry that they do in their souls detest the present Government." And again: "Truly the general nature of all countries not fully conquered is against it (*i.e.* against gentle dealing and concessions). For until by time they find the sweetness of due subjection, it is impossible that any gentle means should put out the remembrance of their

lost liberty. And that the Irishman is that way as obstinate as any nation, with whom no other passion can prevail but fear (besides their history, which plainly points it out), their manner of life, wherein they choose rather all filthiness than any law, and their own consciences, who best know their own natures, give sufficient proof of. For under the sun there is not a nation that live more tyrannously than they do one over the other."

This defence seems to have satisfied Elizabeth and exculpated the Lord Deputy, without impairing its writer's credit at Court. It is the first of a series of semi-official documents, in which, more perhaps than in any other species of composition, Sidney showed his power as a master of language. Waterhouse wrote to Sir Henry that it was the most excellent discourse he had ever read, adding, "Let no man compare with Sir Philip's pen." During the dispute, and before the queen had expressed her satisfaction with the Lord Deputy's defence, Ormond addressed some remarks to Philip in the presence of the Court. The young man made no reply, marking his hostility by silence. It was expected that a duel would follow upon this affront to the great Irish earl. But Ormond, judging it expedient to treat Sidney as a virtuous gentleman who was bound to defend his father's cause, conceded him the indulgence of a superior.

The storm which threatened Sir Henry Sidney blew over, in great measure owing to his son's skilful advocacy. Still Elizabeth retained her grudge against the Viceroy. He had not yet contrived to flatter that most sensitive member of the royal person—her pocket. Consequently, the year 1578 scarcely opened before new

grievances arose. The queen talked of removing Sir Henry from his office—with, perchance, the cumbrous honour of a peerage. He, on the other hand, presented bills to the amount of three thousand and one pounds, for money disbursed from his private estate in the course of public business. She refused to sign a warrant for their payment, alleging, apparently, that the Lord Deputy was creating debts of State in his own interest. Sir Henry retorted—and all the extant documents tend to the belief that his retort was true—that he had spent thus much of his own monies upon trust for her Majesty; and that he needed the sum, barring one pound, for the payment of his daughter's marriage portion to the Earl of Pembroke. Perusal of the correspondence seems to me to prove that, however bad a diplomatist and stubborn a viceroy Sir Henry may have been, he was, at any rate, a thoroughly honest man. And this honest man's debts, contracted in her name and in her service, the queen chose to repudiate. It is not wonderful that, under these circumstances, the Lord Deputy thought of throwing up his appointment and retiring into private life in England. Philip's persuasions induced his father to abandon this design. He pointed out that the term of office would expire at Michaelmas, and that it would be more for the Deputy's credit to tender his resignation at that time without an open rupture. One of his letters shows how valuable in these domestic counsels was the Lady Mary Sidney. Philip writes that in the meantime—that is, between Ladyday and Michaelmas—Sir Henry's friends would do their best to heal the breach; "Among which friends, before God, there is none proceeds either so thoroughly or so

wisely as your lady, my mother. For mine own part, I have had only light from her."

These sentences afford a very pleasing insight into the relations between father, mother, and eldest son. But the tension of the situation for Philip at Court, playing his part as queen's favourite while his father was disgraced, shouldering the Irish braggarts whom she protected, and who had declared war against her viceroy, presenting a brave front before the world, with only an impoverished estate to back him,—the tension of this situation must have been too great for his sensitive nerves. We find that he indulged suspicions. Things transpired at Court which he believed had been committed only in most private correspondence to Sir Henry. He wrote to his father: "I must needs impute it to some men about you that there is little written from you or to you that is not perfectly known to your professed enemies." A few weeks after penning these words he thought that he had caught the culprit in Mr. Edmund Molineux, Sir Henry's secretary. This explains the following furious epistle, which no biographer of Sidney should omit in its proper place:—

"MR. MOLINEUX—Few words are best. My letters to my father have come to the ears of some: neither can I condemn any but you. If it be so, you have played the very knave with me; and so I will make you know, if I have good proof of it. But that for so much as is past. For that is to come, I assure you, before God, that if ever I know you to do so much as read any letter I write to my father without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it, for I speak in earnest. In the meantime, farewell.—From Court, this last of May 1578.

By me, PHILIP SIDNEY."

Philip had made a great mistake—a mistake not unlike that which betrayed him into false judgment of his comrade Coningsby. Molineux was as true as steel to his father, as loyal as Abdiel to the house of Sidney. It was he who composed for Hollingshed the heartfelt panegyrics of Sir Henry, Sir Philip, and Lady Mary. On this occasion he met the young man's brutal insults with words which may have taught him courtesy. The letter deserves to be given in its integrity:—

"SIR—I have received a letter from you which as it is the first so the same is the sharpest that I ever received from any; and therefore it amazeth me the more to receive such an one from you, since I have (the world can judge) deserved better somewhere, howsoever it pleased you to condemn me now. But since it is (I protest to God) without cause, or yet just ground of suspicion, you use me thus, I bear the injury more patiently for a time, and mine innocency I hope in the end shall try mine honesty, and then I trust you will confess that you have done me wrong. And since your pleasure so is expressed that I shall not henceforth read any of your letters (although I must confess I have heretofore taken both great delight and profit in reading some of them) yet upon so hard a condition as you seem to offer, I will not hereafter adventure so great peril, but obey you herein. Howbeit, if it had pleased you, you might have commanded me in a far greater matter with a less penalty.—Yours, when it shall please you better to conceive of me, humbly to command, F. MOLINEUX."

We doubt not that Philip made honourable amends for his unjust imputations, since good friendship afterwards subsisted between him and Molineux. The incident, on which I have thought fit to dwell, reveals something not altogether pleasing in our hero's character. But the real deduction to be drawn from

it is that his position at this time was well-nigh intolerable.

In the midst of these worrying cares he remained in attendance on the queen. It seems that he journeyed with the Court in all her progresses; and in May he formed part of the royal company which Leicester welcomed to his house at Wanstead. The entertainment provided for her Majesty was far simpler than that so famous one at Kenilworth in 1575. Yet it has for us a special interest, inasmuch as here Philip produced his first literary essay. This was a rural masque entitled, *The Lady of the May*. How it came to be written we know not; peradventure at two sittings, between the evening's dance and retirement to bed. The thing is slight and without salt. If it were not still quoted in the list of Sidney's works, we should not notice it; and why it ever was printed I am unable to conjecture, except upon the supposition that even in Elizabeth's days the last drops from a famous pen, however dull they were, found publishers. Of dramatic conception or of power in dialogue it shows nothing; nor are the lyrics tuneful. There is plenty of flattery introduced, apparently to glut the queen's appetite for mud-honey, but yet so clumsily applied as to suggest a suspicion whether the poet were not laughing at her. The only character which reveals force of portraiture and humour is that of Rombus, the pedagogue, into whose mouth Sidney has put some long-winded speeches, satirising the pedantic and grossly ignorant style in vogue among village schoolmasters. Rombus, in fact, is a very rough sketch for the picture of Master Holofernes; as may be judged by his exordium to Queen Elizabeth—

"*Stage Direction.*—Then came forward Master Rombus, and, with many special graces, made this learned oration :—

"Now the thunder-thumping Jove transfund his dotes into your excellent formosity, which have, with your resplendent beams, thus segregated the enmity of these rural animals : I am 'potentissima domina,' a school-master ; that is to say, a pedagogue, one not a little versed in the disciplinating of the juvenile fry, wherein, to my laud I say it, I use such geometrical proportion, as neither wanted mansuetude nor correction : for so it is described—

"'Parcare subjectos, et debellire superbos.'

Yet hath not the pulchritude of my virtues protected me from the contaminating hands of these plebeians ; for coming, 'solummodo,' to have parted their sanguinolent fray, they yielded me no more reverence than if I had been some 'pecorius asinus.' I, even I, that am, who am I ? 'Dixi ; verbus sapiento satum est.' But what said that Trojan Æneas, when he sojourned in the surging sulks of the sandiferous seas ?

"'Haec olim memonasse juvebit.'

Well, well, 'ad propositos revertebo ;' the purity of the verity is, that a certain 'pulchra puella profecto,' elected and constituted by the integrated determination of all this topographical region, as the sovereign lady of this dame Maia's month, hath been, 'quodammodo,' hunted, as you would say ; pursued by two, a brace, a couple, a cast of young men, to whom the crafty coward Cupid had, 'inquam,' delivered his dire dolorous dart."

During this summer Philip obtained a place at Court, the importance of which his friend Languet seems to have exaggerated. Zouch says it was the post of cupbearer to the queen ; and in this statement there is no improbability, but there is also nothing to warrant it. At any rate the office failed to satisfy his ambition ; for

he wrote complainingly, as usual, of the irksomeness of Court existence. How disagreeable that must in some respects have been is made clear to us by Lady Mary's letters in the autumn of this year. She was expecting her husband home from Ireland. He had to reside with her at Hampton Court, where she could only call one bedroom her own. To the faithful Molineux she writes :—

"I have thought good to put you in remembrance to move my Lord Chamberlain in my Lord's name, to have some other room than my chamber for my Lord to have his resort unto, as he was wont to have ; or else my Lord will be greatly troubled, when he shall have any matters of despatch : my lodgings, you see, being very little, and myself continually sick and not able to be much out of my bed. For the night-time one roof, with God's grace, shall serve us. For the daytime, the queen will look to have my chamber always in a readiness for her Majesty's coming thither ; and though my Lord himself can be no impediment thereto by his own presence, yet his Lordship, trusting to no place else to be provided for him, will be, as I said before, troubled for want of a convenient place for the despatch of such people as shall have occasion to come to him. Therefore, I pray you, in my Lord's own name, move my Lord of Sussex for a room for that purpose, and I will have it hanged and lined for him with stuff from hence. I wish you not to be unmindful hereof ; and so for this time I leave you to the Almighty.—From Chiswick this 11th October 1578."

It would appear that Lady Mary's very modest request for a second room, which she undertook to furnish out of her own wardrobe, was not at once granted. Another letter to Molineux shows that he had made some progress in the matter, but had not succeeded. Hampton Court, she writes, however full it

may be, has always several spare rooms. Perhaps there are those who "will be sorry my Lord should have so sure footing in the Court." Could not Molineux contrive the loan of a parlour for her husband in the daytime? Yet, after all, "when the worst is known, old Lord Harry and his old Moll will do as well as they can in parting, like good friends, the small portion allotted our long service in Court." There is something half pathetic and half comic in the picture thus presented to our minds of the great Duke of Northumberland's daughter, with her husband, the Viceroy of Ireland and Wales, dwelling at hugger-mugger in one miserable chamber—she well-nigh bedridden, he transacting his business in a corner of it, and the queen momently expected upon visitations, not always, we may guess, of friendship or affection. Yet the touch of homely humour in the last sentence I have quoted from the noble lady's letter, sheds a pleasant light upon the sordid scene.

Studying the details of Court life both in Italy and England at this period, we are often led to wonder why noblemen with spacious palaces and venerable mansions of their own to dwell in—why men of genius whose brilliant gifts made them acceptable in every cultivated circle—should have submitted so complacently to its ignoble conditions. Even those who seemed unable to breathe outside the sphere of the Court spoke most bitterly against it. Tasso squandered his health, his talents, nay, his reason, in that servitude. Guarini, after impairing his fortune, and wasting the best years of his manhood at Ferrara, retired to a country villa, and indulged his spleen in venomous invectives against the vices and the ignominies he had abandoned. Marino, who flaunted his gay

plumage at Turin and Paris, screamed like a cockatoo with cynical spite whenever the word Court was mentioned. The only wise man of that age in Italy was the literary bravo Aretino. He, having debauched his youth in the vilest places of the Roman Courts, resolved to live a free man henceforth. Therefore he took refuge in Venice, where he caressed his sensual appetites and levied blackmail on society. From that retreat, which soon became a sty of luxury, he hurled back upon the Courts the filth which he had gathered in them. His dialogue on Court service is one of the most savage and brutally naked exposures of depravity which satirical literature contains. In England there was indeed a far higher tone of manliness and purity and personal independence at the Court than obtained in Italy. Yet listen to Spenser's memorable lines, obviously poured forth from the heart and coloured by bitterest experience:—

> "Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,
> What hell it is in suing long to bide:
> To lose good days, that might be better spent;
> To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
> To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers';
> To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
> To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
> To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone:
> Unhappy wight, born to disastrous end,
> That doth his life in so long tendance spend!"

Therefore we return to wondering what it was in Courts which made gentlefolk convert broad acres into

cash that they might shine there, which lured noblemen from their castles and oak-shaded deer-parks to occupy a stuffy bedroom in a royal palace, and squires from their moss-grown manor-houses to jolt along the roads on horseback in attendance on a termagant like Elizabeth or a learned pig like James I. The real answer to these questionings is that, in the transition from mediæval to modern conditions of life, the Court had become a social necessity for folk of a certain quality and certain aspirations. It was the only avenue to public employment; the only sphere in which a man of ambition, who was neither clerk in orders nor lawyer, could make his mark; the only common meeting-ground for rank, beauty, wealth, and genius. Thus it exercised a splendid fascination, the reflex of which is luminous in our dramatic literature. After reading those sad and bitter lines of Spenser, we should turn to the pages of Fletcher's *Valentinian*, where the allurements of the Court are eloquently portrayed in the great scene of Lucina's attempted seduction. Or better, let us quote the ecstasies of Fortunatus from the most fanciful of Dekker's plays:—

"For still in all the regions I have seen,
I scorned to crowd among the muddy throng
Of the rank multitude, whose thickened breath,
Like to condensed fogs, do choke that beauty
Which else would dwell in every kingdom's cheek.
No, I still boldly stepped into their courts,
For there to live 'tis rare, oh, 'tis divine!
There shall you see faces angelical;
There shall you see troops of chaste goddesses,
Whose star-like eyes have power (might they still shine)
To make night day, and day more crystalline:
Near these you shall behold great heroës,

White-headed counsellors, and jovial spirits,
Standing like fiery cherubims to guard
The monarch who in god-like glory sits
In midst of these, as if this deity
Had with a look created a new world,
The standers-by being the fair workmanship."

Philip, like so many of his contemporaries, continued to waver between the irresistible attraction of the Court and the centrifugal force which urged him to be up and doing, anywhere, at any occupation, away from its baneful and degrading idleness. Just now, in the summer of 1578, he was hankering to join his friend, John Casimir, at Zutphen. Elizabeth had nominated this prince to her lieutenancy in the Low Countries, supplying him with money in small quantities for the levying of troops. When he took the field, Philip burned to accept an invitation sent him by the prince. But first he had to gain his father's permission. Sir Henry's answer is the model of kindness and of gentle unselfishness. He begins by acknowledging the honour paid his son, and commending Philip's eagerness. But "when I enter into the consideration of mine own estate, and call to mind what practices, informations, and wicked accusations are devised against me, and what an assistance in the defence of those causes your presence would be unto me, reposing myself so much both upon your help and judgment, I strive betwixt honour and necessity what allowance I may best give of that motion for your going." Then he goes on to say that he leaves the consideration of these matters to his son, and will in no way check his inclination or refuse his consent. Philip sacrificed his wishes, and

remained in England to assist his father. This act of filial compliance cost him, as it happened, nothing; for Casimir's dealings in the Netherlands brought no credit to himself or his companions. None the less should we appreciate the amiable trait in Sidney's character.

Sir Henry returned in due course to England in the autumn, and tendered his resignation of the Irish Vice-royalty. He still maintained his post as Lord President of Wales. On New Year's Day, 1579, presents were exchanged, as usual, between Elizabeth and her chief courtiers. Poor Sir Henry, out of pocket as he was, presented her Majesty with a jewel of gold, diamonds, pearls, and rubies, upon which was wrought a figure of Diana. She returned a hundred and thirty-eight ounces of gold plate. Lady Mary and Philip offered articles of dress, receiving their equivalent in plate. Prince Casimir, who had to answer for his malconduct of affairs in the Low Countries, reached London in the month of January. The queen gave him a gracious reception. He was nominated to a stall in St. George's chapel, and entertained with various amusements. Among other sports, we hear that he shot a stag in Hyde Park. On the 12th of February he again left England with presents from the queen. A letter of the day significantly alludes to her unwilling bestowal of money on the prince: "There hath been somewhat to do to bring her unto it, and Mr. Secretary Walsingham bare the brunt thereof."

One incident of Casimir's visit must not be omitted. Hubert Languet, old as he now was, and failing in health, resolved to set his eyes once more on his beloved Philip. "I am almost afraid," he wrote in January, "that my

great desire of seeing you may betray me into thinking I am better than I am, yet I will do my very utmost to be ready for the journey, even though I should take it at the peril of my life." He came and went safely, had the pleasure of conversing with Philip, and made friends with the chief members of the Sidney family. A letter written in the autumn of the next year shows that this experienced judge of men and cities formed no very favourable opinion of the English Court. "I was pleased last winter to find you flourishing in favour, and highly esteemed by all men. Yet, to conceal nothing, it appeared to me that the manners of your Court are less manly than I could wish; and the majority of your great folk struck me as more eager to gain applause by affected courtesy, than by such virtues as benefit the commonwealth, and are the chief ornament of noble minds and high-born personages. It grieved me then, as also your other friends, that you should waste the flower of your youth in such trifles. I began to fear lest your excellent disposition should at last be blunted, lest you should come by habit to care for things which soften and emasculate our mind."

We have already seen that Sidney was not otherwise than himself alive to these dangers, and that he chafed continually at the "expense of spirit in a waste" of frivolities. As a couplet in one of his occasional poems puts it—

> "Greater was the shepherd's treasure,
> Than this false, fine, courtly pleasure."

From the same poem we learn that his friendship for Fulke Greville and Edward Dyer continued to be his

mainstay at the Court; and when I enter upon the details of his literary career, it will become apparent that much of his time had been already spent with these and other cultivated gentlefolk in the prosecution of serious studies. For the present it seems better not to interrupt the history of his external life.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRENCH MATCH AND "THE ARCADIA"

THE years 1579 and 1580 are of importance in the biography of Sidney, owing to the decided part he took in the discussion of the French match. Elizabeth's former suitor, d'Alençon, now bore the title of Duke of Anjou, by his brother Henri's accession to the throne of France. Time had cast a decent veil over the memory of St. Bartholomew, and Anjou was now posing as the protector of national liberties in the Low Countries. He thought the opportunity good for renewing negotiations with the Queen of England. That the Court of the Valois was anxious to arrange the marriage admits of no doubt. The sums of money spent in presents and embassies render this certain, for Catherine de' Medici and her sons were always in pecuniary difficulties. They could not afford to throw gold away on trifles.

Elizabeth showed a strong inclination to accept the duke's proposal. She treated his envoy, Du Simiers, with favour, and kept up a brisk correspondence with Paris. The match, however, was extremely unpopular with the English people. In the autumn of 1579 there appeared a pamphlet entitled: "The Discovery of the Gaping Gulf, whereinto England is like to be swal-

lowed, by a French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the Banns, by letting her Majesty see the Sin and Punishment thereof." This sufficed to indicate the temper of the best part of the nation, the Protestants, who saw their religious and political liberties in danger. Stubbs and Page, the author and the printer of this "lewd and seditious book," as it was termed by royal proclamation, were each condemned to lose the right hand. Stubbs, when the hangman had performed his office, waved his hat with the left hand, crying "God save the Queen!" Page pointed to his bloody hand upon the ground, and said, "There lies the hand of a true Englishman!"

At Court opinion was divided. Elizabeth's flatterers, with Oxford at their head, declared themselves loudly in favour of the match. Leicester opposed it; but Du Simiers' opportune discovery of the secret marriage with Lady Essex ruined his credit. The great earl had to retire in disgrace. Camden relates that the queen banished him until further notice to Greenwich Castle. Fulke Greville says "the French faction reigning had cast aspersions upon his (Sidney's) uncle of Leicester, and made him, like a wise man (under colour of taking physic) voluntarily become prisoner in his chamber." Whether his retirement was compulsory or voluntary matters little. For the time he lost his influence, and was unable to show his face at Court. Thus Philip who had already elected to "join with the weaker party and oppose this torrent," found himself at the moment of his greatest need deprived of the main support which powerful connections gave him.

Greville has devoted a chapter to his action in this matter, analysing with much detail the reasons which

moved him to oppose the queen's inclination. It is not necessary to report his friend's view of the case, since I shall shortly have to present an abstract of the famous document which Sidney drew up for Elizabeth's perusal. Yet the exordium to this chapter may be quoted, as representing in brief his position at the close of 1579.

"The next doubtful stage he had to act upon (howsoever it may seem private) was grounded upon a public and specious proposition of marriage between the late famous queen and the Duke of Anjou. With which current, although he saw the great and wise men of the time suddenly carried down, and every one fishing to catch the queen's humour in it; yet when he considered the difference of years, person, education, state, and religion between them; and then called to mind the success of our former alliances with the French; he found many reasons to make question whether it would prove poetical or real on their part. And if real, whether the balance swayed not unequally, by adding much to them and little to his sovereign. The duke's greatness being only name and possibility; and both these either to wither or to be maintained at her cost. Her state, again, in hand; and though royally sufficient to satisfy that queen's princely and moderate desires or expenses, yet perchance inferior to bear out those mixed designs into which his ambition or necessities might entice or draw her."

It came to pass, through Leicester's disgrace, that Philip stood almost alone at Court as the resolute opponent of the French faction. The profligate and unscrupulous Earl of Oxford, now foremost in the queen's favour, was carrying his head aloft, boastful of his compliance with her wishes, and counting doubtless on the highest honours when the match should be completed. An accident brought the two champions of the opposed parties into personal collision. One of Languet's letters

enables us to fix the date of the event in September 1579, and Greville's minute account of the same is so curious that I shall transcribe it without further comment.

"Thus stood the Court at that time; and thus stood this ingenuous spirit in it. If dangerously in men's opinions who are curious of the present, and in it rather to do craftily than well: yet, I say, that princely heart of hers was a sanctuary unto him; and as for the people, in whom many times the lasting images of worth are preferred before the temporary visions of art or favour, he could not fear to suffer any thing there, which would not prove a kind of trophy to him. . . . In this freedom of heart, being one day at tennis, a peer of this realm, born great, greater by alliance, and superlative in the prince's favour, abruptly came into the tennis-court; and, speaking out of these three paramount authorities, he forgot to entreat that which he could not legally command. When, by the encounter of a steady object, finding unrespectiveness in himself (though a great lord) not respected by this princely spirit, he grew to expostulate more roughly. The returns of which style coming still from an understanding heart, that knew what was due to itself and what it ought to others, seemed (through the mists of my lord's passion, swollen with the wind of this faction then reigning) to provoke in yielding. Whereby, the less amazement or confusion of thoughts he stirred up in Sir Philip, the more shadows this great lord's own mind was possessed with; till at last with rage (which is ever ill-disciplined) he commands them to depart the court. To this Sir Philip temperately answers; that if his lordship had been pleased to express desire in milder characters, perchance he might have led out those that he should now find would not be driven out with any scourge of fury. This answer (like a bellows) blowing up the sparks of excess already kindled, made my lord scornfully call Sir Philip by the name of *puppy*. In which progress of heat, as the tempest grew more and more vehement within, so did their hearts breathe out their perturbations in a more loud and shrill accent. The

French Commissioners unfortunately had that day audience in those private galleries whose windows looked into the tennis-court. They instantly drew all to this tumult: every sort of quarrels sorting well with their humours, especially this. Which Sir Philip perceiving, and rising with an inward strength by the prospect of a mighty faction against him, asked my lord with a loud voice that which he heard clearly enough before. Who (like an echo that still multiplies by reflexions) repeated this epithet of *puppy* the second time. Sir Philip, resolving in one answer to conclude both the attentive hearers and passionate actor, gave my lord a lie, impossible (as he averred) to be retorted; in respect all the world knows, puppies are gotten by dogs and children by men.

Hereupon these glorious inequalities of fortune in his lordship were put to a kind of pause by a precious inequality of nature in this gentleman; so that they both stood silent a while, like a dumb show in a tragedy; till Sir Philip, sensible of his own wrong, the foreign and factious spirits that attended, and yet even in this question between him and his superior tender of his country's honour, with some words of sharp accent led the way abruptly out of the tennis-court; as if so unexpected an incident were not fit to be decided in that place. Whereof the great lord making another sense, continues his play, without any advantage of reputation, as by the standard of humours in those times it was conceived."

Thus the Earl of Oxford called Sidney a puppy; and Sidney gave him the lie. It was judged inevitable that the former would send a challenge and a duel would ensue. But Oxford delayed to vindicate his honour. The Lords of the Council intervened, and persuaded the queen to effect a reconciliation. She pointed out to Sidney that he owed deference to a peer of the realm. "He besought her Majesty to consider that although he were a great lord by birth, alliance, and grace; yet he was no lord over him." As free men and gentlemen the

earl and himself were equals, except in the matter of precedency. Moreover, he reminded Elizabeth that it had been her father's policy to shield the gentry from the oppression of the grandees, in the wise opinion that the Crown would gain by using the former as a balance to the power and ambition of the latter. But having stated his case, he seems to have deferred to her wishes. We do not hear that apologies were made on either side. The matter, however, dropped; Oxford so far retaining his resentment that Sidney's friends believed he entertained a scheme for his assassination.

After reading this passage, we may remember with what spirit on a former occasion Philip gave the cut direct to Ormond. It is also interesting to compare his carriage upon both occasions with that of his nephew, the Viscount l'Isle, who bearded James' favourite, James Hay, at that time Viscount Doncaster, in his own chamber. A detailed account of this incident, written by Lord l'Isle in vindication of his honour, is printed among the Sidney papers. It casts valuable light upon the manners of the English Court, and illustrates the sturdy temper of the Sidney breed.

Philip contrived apparently to keep the queen's goodwill until the beginning of 1580; for she accepted his present of a crystal cup on New Year's Day. But his position at Court was difficult. Oxford, it was commonly believed, had planned his murder; and being an Italianated Englishman—in other words, a devil incarnate—he may well have entertained some project of the sort. As the avowed champion of the opposition, wielding a pen with which no man could compete, Sidney thought the time had now come to bring matters to an issue by plain

utterance. Therefore he drew up a carefully-prepared memorial, setting forth in firm but most respectful language those arguments which seemed to him decisive against the French match. This he presented to Elizabeth early in 1580. Immediately after its perusal, she began to show her resentment, and Philip, like his uncle, found it convenient to leave the Court. His retreat was Wilton, where he remained in privacy for seven months.

I have elsewhere remarked that Sidney showed his powers as a thinker and prose-writer nowhere more eminently than in documents, presenting a wide survey of facts, marshalling a series of arguments, combining the prudence of a statesman and the cunning of an orator. This memorial to the queen is a gem in its own species of composition. It well deserves the high praise which has been given it as "at once the most eloquent and the most courageous piece of that nature which the age can boast. Every important view of the subject is comprised in this letter, which is long, but at the same time so condensed in style and so skilfully compacted as to matter that it well deserves to be read entire; and must lose materially either by abridgement or omission." In it Sidney appeals to what Fulke Greville quaintly calls "that princely heart of hers which was a sanctuary unto him." He enters the sanctuary with reverence, and stands alone there, pleading like a servant before his mistress. He speaks to Elizabeth in the character of a simple gentleman and loyal subject, relying on no support of party, nor representing himself as the mouthpiece of an indignant nation. This independent attitude gives singular lucidity and beauty to his appeal. It is the grave but modest warning of a faithful squire to

his liege lady in the hour of danger. Although extracts can do but scanty justice to the merits of Sidney's oratory, I must present such specimens as may serve as samples of his English style and display his method of exposition. He begins as follows:—

"MOST FEARED AND BELOVED, MOST SWEET AND GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN—To seek out excuses of this my boldness, and to arm the acknowledging of a fault with reasons for it, might better show I knew I did amiss, than any way diminish the attempt, especially in your judgment; who being able to discern lively into the nature of the thing done, it were folly to hope, by laying on better colours, to make it more acceptable. Therefore, carrying no other olive branch of intercession, than the laying of myself at your feet; nor no other insinuation, either for attention or pardon, but the true vowed sacrifice of unfeigned love; I will, in simple and direct terms (as hoping they shall only come to your merciful eyes), set down the overflowing of my mind in this most important matter, importing, as I think, the continuance of your safety; and as I know, the joys of my life. And because my words (I confess shallow, but coming from the deep well-spring of most loyal affection) have delivered to your most gracious ear, what is the general sum of my travelling thoughts therein; I will now but only declare, what be the reasons that make me think, that the marriage with Monsieur will be unprofitable unto you; then will I answer the objection of those fears, which might procure so violent a refuge."

Having finished these personal explanations, he proceeds to show that the French marriage must be considered from a double point of view, first as regarding the queen's estate, and secondly as touching her person. Her real power as "an absolute born, and accordingly respected princess," rests upon the affection of her subjects, who are now divided between Protestants and Catholics. The former,

"As their souls live by your happy government, so are they your chief, if not your sole, strength: these, howsoever the necessity of human life makes them lack, yet can they not look for better conditions than presently they enjoy: these, how their hearts will be galled, if not aliened, when they shall see you take a husband, a Frenchman and a Papist, in whom (howsoever fine wits may find farther dealings or painted excuses) the very common people well know this, that he is the son of a Jezebel of our age: that his brother made oblation of his own sister's marriage, the easier to make massacres of our brethren in belief: that he himself, contrary to his promise, and all gratefulness, having his liberty and principal estate by the Hugonot's means, did sack La Charité, and utterly spoil them with fire and sword. This, I say, even at first sight, gives occasion to all, truly religious, to abhor such a master, and consequently to diminish much of the hopeful love they have long held to you."

The Catholics are discontented and disaffected. They will grasp easily at any chance of a revolution in religion and the State; and to such folk the French match is doubtless acceptable, not as producing good to the commonwealth, but as offering them the opportunity of change.

"If then the affectionate side have their affections weakened, and the discontented have a gap to utter their discontent, I think it will seem an ill preparative for the patient (I mean your estate) to a great sickness."

From these general reflections upon the state of parties in England, Sidney passes to a consideration of the Duke of Anjou's personal qualities. The following paragraph is marked by skilful blending of candour with reserve. Elizabeth had declared a special partiality for the French prince. It is her subject's duty to paint him as inconstant, restless in ambition, uncertain in his affections,

swayed by light-brained and factious counsellors, greedy of power at any cost. His profession of the Catholic faith renders him a dangerous tool in the hands of disaffected English Papists. His position as next heir to the French Crown makes him an inconvenient consort for the queen of Great Britain. It is not likely that a man of his temper and pretensions should put up with a subordinate place in his wife's kingdom. And why, asks Sidney, has Elizabeth set her heart upon a marriage so fraught with dangers? "Often have I heard you with protestation say no private pleasure nor self-affection could lead you to it." Is it because she looks forward to the bliss of children? If so she may marry where the disadvantages are less. But she has herself alleged that she is moved by "fear of standing alone in respect to foreign dealings," and also by "doubt of contempt in them from whom you should have respect." These two points, since they bias the queen's mind, have to be separately entertained. Leagues are usually cemented by the desires or the fears of the contracting parties. What public desires have Elizabeth and the duke in common?

"He of the Romish religion; and if he be a man, must needs have that man-like property to desire that all men be of his mind: you the erector and defender of the contrary, and the only sun that dazzleth their eyes: he French, and desiring to make France great; your Majesty English, and desiring nothing less than that France should not grow great: he, both by his own fancy and his youthful governors, embracing all ambitious hopes; having Alexander's image in his head, but perhaps evil-painted: your Majesty with excellent virtue taught what you should hope, and by no less wisdom what you may hope; with a council renowned over all Christen-

dom for their well-tempered minds, having set the utmost of their ambition in your favour, and the study of their souls in your safety."

The interests and the dangers of France and England are so diverse that these realms have no fears in common to unite them. Elizabeth, therefore, can expect nothing but perplexity in her foreign dealings from the match. Is it reasonable that she should hope to secure the affection of her subjects, and to guard herself against their contempt, by marriage with a Frenchman? Can she be ignorant that she is the idol of her people? It is indeed true that the succession is uncertain through lack of heirs of her body:

"But in so lineal a monarchy, wherever the infants suck the love of their rightful prince, who would leave the beams of so fair a sun for the dreadful expectation of a divided company of stars? Virtue and justice are the only bonds of people's love; and as for that point, many princes have lost their crowns whose own children were manifest successors; and some that had their own children used as instruments of their ruin; not that I deny the bliss of children, but only to show religion and equity to be of themselves sufficient stays."

It may be demurred that scurrilous libels have been vented against her Majesty, proving some insubordination in her subjects. She ought, however, to "care little for the barking of a few curs." Honest Englishmen regard such attacks upon her dignity as blasphemous.

"No, no, most excellent lady, do not raze out the impression you have made in such a multitude of hearts; and let not the scum of such vile minds bear any witness against your subjects' devotions. The only means of avoiding con-

tempt are love and fear; love, as you have by divers means sent into the depth of their souls, so if anything can stain so true a form, it must be the trimming yourself not in your own likeness, but in new colours unto them."

In other words, Sidney means that the Queen's proposed course will alienate instead of confirming the affections of the nation. He then passes to his peroration, which I shall quote in full as a fair specimen of his eloquence:—

"Since then it is dangerous for your state, as well because by inward weakness (principally caused by division) it is fit to receive harm; since to your person it can be no way comfortable, you not desiring marriage; and neither to person nor estate he is to bring any more good than anybody; but more evil he may, since the causes that should drive you to this are either fears of that which cannot happen, or by this means cannot be prevented; I do with most humble heart say unto your Majesty (having assayed this dangerous help) for your standing alone, you must take it for a singular honour God hath done you, to be indeed the only protector of his Church; and yet in worldly respects your kingdom very sufficient so to do, if you make that religion upon which you stand, to carry the only strength, and have abroad those that still maintain the same course; who as long as they may be kept from utter falling, your Majesty is sure enough from your mightiest enemies. As for this man, as long as he is but Monsieur in might, and a Papist in profession, he neither can nor will greatly shield you; and if he get once to be king, his defence will be like Ajax's shield, which rather weighed them down than defended those that bare it. Against contempt, if there be any, which I will never believe, let your excellent virtues of piety, justice, and liberality daily, if it be possible, more and more shine. Let such particular actions be found out (which be easy as I think to be done) by which you may gratify all the hearts of your people. Let those in whom you find trust, and to whom you have committed trust in your weighty affairs be held up in the

eyes of your subjects. Lastly, doing as you do, you shall be, as you be, the example of princes, the ornament of this age, and the most excellent fruit of your progenitors, and the perfect mirror of your posterity.—Your Majesty's faithful, humble, and obedient subject, P. SYDNEY."

In the early spring of 1580 Sidney went to stay at Wilton, and remained there during the summer. His sister, the Countess of Pembroke, for whom Jonson wrote the famous epitaph, and whom Spenser described as

> "The gentlest shepherdess that lives this day,
> And most resembling both in shape and spright
> Her brother dear,"

was united to him by the tenderest bonds of affection and by common literary interests. Good judges, among whom Jonson may be reckoned, valued her poetry at least as high as Philip's; and this opinion is confirmed by what remains to us of her compositions. The accent of deep and passionate feeling which gives force to some of the *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets, is indeed lacking to her verse. But if we are right in believing that only the first forty-two psalms in their joint translation belong to him, her part in that work exhibits the greater measure of felicity. It was apparently upon this visit to Wilton that the brother and sister began to render the Psalms of David into various lyrical metres. After the Vulgate and the Prayer-Book all translations of the Psalms, even those done by Milton, seem tame and awkward. Nor can I except the Sidneys from this criticism. In an essay, then, which must of necessity be economical of space, I shall omit further notice of this version. The opportunity, however, is now given for digressing from

Philip's biography to the consideration of his place and achievements in English literature.

It is of importance to bear steadily in mind the date of Sidney's birth in order to judge correctly of his relation to predecessors and successors. Wyat, Surrey, Sackville, and Norton had already acclimatised Italian forms of poetry and classical principles of metre upon English soil. But very little of first-rate excellence can be referred to this period of our Renaissance. A form of the sonnet peculiar to English literature, and blank verse, destined to become its epic and dramatic metre, were the two chief results of these earliest innovating experiments. Fulke Greville, himself no mean poet, was born in 1554, the same year as Sidney; Raleigh had been born in 1552; Spenser and Lyly in 1553; Drayton followed in 1563; Shakespeare and Marlowe in 1564; Donne not till 1573, and Jonson one year later yet; Wyat and Surrey were both dead some while before Sidney saw the light; and Sackville, though he still lived, was not much occupied with literature. It will therefore be seen that he belonged to that intermediate group of writers, of whom Spenser was the greatest, and who preceded the brilliant burst of genius in the last decade of the sixteenth century. It was as the morning star of an unexampled day of lyric and dramatic splendour that his contemporaries hailed him.

In the year 1578 Philip attended Queen Elizabeth on one of her progresses when she stayed at Audley End, and there received the homage of some Cambridge scholars. Among these came Gabriel Harvey, a man of character and parts, but of no distinguished literary talent. He was what we now should call a doctrinaire;

yet he possessed so tough a personality as to exercise considerable influence over his contemporaries. Harvey enthusiastically declared himself for the remodelling of English metres on the classic method. The notion was not new. Ascham, in the *Schoolmaster*, pointed out "how our English tongue in avoiding barbarous rhyming may as well receive right quantity of syllables and true order of versifying as either Greek or Latin, if a cunning man have it in handling." He quoted Bishop Watson's hexameters in proof of this proposition :—

"All travellers do gladly report great praise of Ulysses
For that he knew many men's manners and saw many cities."

Yet his good sense saved him from the absurdities into which Stanyhurst, the translator of the *Aeneid*, fell when he attempted Virgil in a "rude and beggarly" modern imitation of the Latin rhythm. Ascham summed the question up in a single sentence, prophetic of the future course of English versification. "Although Carmen Hexametrum doth rather trot and hobble than run smoothly in our English tongue, yet I am sure our English tongue will receive Carmen Iambicum as naturally as either Greek or Latin." Harvey was not so finely gifted as Ascham to perceive the native strength and weakness of our language. He could see no reason why the hexameter should not flourish, and wrote verses, which, for grotesqueness, may pass muster with the most "twitching and hopping" of their kind. Robert Greene, who also tried his hand at the new style, composed smoother but more insipid numbers in the eclogue of Alexis. But Harvey, as I have said, exercised the influence of an imperious personality; and one of his

friends was Edmund Spenser. Through Harvey, Sidney became acquainted with Spenser; and it is well known that the latter dedicated *The Shepherd's Calendar* to him in 1579. The publication was anonymous. The dedication ran as follows:—"To the noble and virtuous gentleman, most worthy of all titles, both of learning and chivalry, Master Philip Sidney." The envoy opened with these charming triplets:—

> "Go, little book! thyself present,
> As child whose parent is unkent,
> To him that is the president
> Of nobleness and chivalry;
> And if that envy bark at thee,
> As sure it will, for succour flee
> Under the shadow of his wing;
> And, askèd who thee forth did bring,
> A shepherd's swain, say, did thee sing,
> All as his straying flock he fed;
> And when his honour has thee read
> Crave pardon for thy hardihead."

In the midst, then, of his Court life Sidney made friends with Harvey and with Spenser. He associated his dearer intimates, Fulke Greville and Edward Dyer, in the same companionship. And thus a little academy, formed apparently upon the Italian model, came into existence. Its critical tendency was indicated by the name Areopagus, given it perhaps in fun by Spenser; and its practical object was the reformation of English poetry upon Italian and classical principles. Unless I am mistaken, no member of the club applied its doctrines so thoroughly in practice as Sidney. It is true that Harvey wished to have it inscribed upon his grave that he had fostered hexameters on English soil. But in the

history of our poetical literature Harvey occupies no place of honour. It is also true that Spenser elaborated some lame hexameters. But his genius detected the imposture; he wrote to Harvey, pointing out the insurmountable difficulties of English accent, and laughing at the metre as being "either like a lame gosling that draweth up one leg after, or like a lame dog that holdeth one leg up."

Sidney, with his usual seriousness, took the search after a reformed style of English poetry in earnest. He made experiments in many kinds and various metres, which are now preserved to us embedded in the text of his *Arcadia*. Those poems form the most solid residuum from the exercises of the Areopagus. They are not very valuable; but they are interesting as showing what the literary temper of England was, before the publication of the *Faery Queen* and the overwhelming series of the romantic dramas decided the fate of English poetry. Like *Gorboduc* and other tragedies in the manner of Seneca, these "reformed verses" were doomed to be annihilated by the strong blast of the national genius. But they have their importance for the student of crepuscular intervals between the darkness and the day-spring; and it must not be forgotten that their author did not intend them for the public eye. While studying and using these verses as documents for the elucidation of literary evolution, let us therefore bear in mind that we are guilty of an indiscretion, and are prying on the privacy of a gentleman who never sought the suffrage of the vulgar.

It was at Wilton, then, in 1580, that Sidney began the *Arcadia* in compliance with his sister's request.

The dedicatory epistle teaches us in what spirit we ought to approach the pages which he left unfinished, and which were given to the press after his decease:

"Here now have you, most dear, and most worthy to be most dear lady, this idle work of mine; which, I fear, like the spider's web, will be thought fitter to be swept away than worn to any other purpose. For my part, in very truth, as the cruel fathers among the Greeks were wont to do to the babes they would not foster, I could well find it in my heart to cast out in some desert of forgetfulness this child which I am loth to father. But you desired me to do it, and your desire to my heart is an absolute commandment. Now it is done only for you, only to you. If you keep it to yourself, or to such friends who will weigh error in the balance of good-will, I hope for the father's sake it will be pardoned, perchance made much of, though in itself it have deformities. For, indeed, for severer eyes it is not, being a a trifle, and that triflingly handled."

These words were doubtless penned long after the first sheets of the *Arcadia*. That they were sincere is proved by Sidney's dying request to have the manuscript destroyed. He goes on to say that "his chief safety shall be the not walking abroad; and his chief protection the using of your name, which, if much good-will do not deceive me, is worthy to be a sanctuary for a greater offender." We have, therefore, the strongest possible security that this famous *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney, this "charm of ages," as Young pompously calls it, which passed through seventeen editions before 1674, was intended by its author only for his sister and a friendly circle. Yet, though we must approach it now like eavesdroppers, we may read in it, better perhaps than elsewhere, those tendencies of English literature which

were swallowed up and trampled over by the legionaries of the great dramatic epoch.

It is not improbable that Lyly's *Euphues*, which first saw the light in 1579, suggested to Sidney the notion of writing a romance in a somewhat similar style. He did not, however, catch the infection of Lyly's manner; and the *Arcadia*, unlike *Euphues*, has no direct didactic purpose. Critics, soon after its appearance, imagined that they could discern in its structure hidden references to the main events of the age. But this may be considered a delusion, based upon the prevalent tendency to seek allegories in works of art and fancy—the tendency to which Tasso bowed when he supplied a key to the moralities of the *Gerusalemme*, and which induced Spenser to read esoteric meanings into the *Orlando Furioso*. Sidney had clearly in mind the *Arcadia* of Sannazzaro; he also owed much to Montemayor's *Diana* and the Greek romantic novelists. The style at first is noticeably Italian, as will appear from certain passages I mean to quote. After a while it becomes less idyllic and ornate, and at last it merges into rapidity of narration. To sustain the manner of the earlier pages, which remind us of Boccaccio and Sannazzaro, throughout the labyrinthine intricacies of the fable, would have been tedious. Perhaps, too, we may connect the alteration of literary tone with Sidney's departure from Wilton to the Court.

I shall not attempt a complete analysis of the *Arcadia*. The main story is comparatively slender; but it is so complicated by digressions and episodes that a full account of the tangled plot would take up too much space, and would undoubtedly prove wearisome to

modern readers. Horace Walpole was not far wrong when he asserted that "the patience of a young virgin in love cannot now wade through" that jungle of pastoral, sentimental, and heroical adventures. A brief outline of the tale, together with some specimens of Sidney's descriptive and sententious styles, must, however, here be given, since it is not very likely that any readers of my book will be impelled to turn the pages of the original.

Musidorus, Prince of Thessalia, and Pyrocles, Prince of Macedon, were cousins. An affection, such as bound the knights of elder Greek romance together, united them even more than the nearness of their blood. Pyrocles, being the elder, taught his friend all that he knew of good, and brave, and gracious. Musidorus learned willingly; and thus the pair grew up to manhood in perfect love, twin flowers of gentleness and chivalry. When the story opens the two heroes have just been wrecked on the Laconian coast. A couple of shepherds, Claius and Strephon, happened to be pacing the seashore at that moment. They noticed a young man floating on a coffer, which the waves washed gradually landward. He was "of so goodly shape and well-pleasing favour that one would think death had in him a lovely countenance; and that, though he were naked, nakedness was to him an apparel." This youth proved to be Musidorus. Pyrocles meanwhile remained upon the wreck; and, while the shepherds were in the act to rescue him, he was carried off by pirates under the eyes of his sorrowing comrade. There was nothing for it but to leave him to his fate; and Musidorus, after a moment of wild despair, yielded to the exhortations of the good shepherds, who persuaded him to journey with

them to the house of a just and noble gentleman named Kalander. The way was long; but, after two days' march, it brought them to Arcadia. The description of that land is justly celebrated.

"The third day after, in the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floor, against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty variety recount their wrong-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep; and rising from under a tree (which that night had been their pavilion), they went on their journey, which by-and-by welcomed Musidorus's eyes (wearied with the wasted soil of Laconia) with delightful prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble vallies, whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers: meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade were witnessed so too by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober security, while the pretty lambs with bleating outcry craved the dam's comfort: here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing; and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voice-music. As for the houses of the country (for many houses came under their eye), they were all scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so far off as that it barred mutual succour; a show, as it were, of an accompanable solitariness and of a civil wildness."

In due course of time they arrived at the house of Kalander, where Musidorus was hospitably received.

"The house itself was built of fair and strong stone, not affecting so much any extraordinary kind of fineness as an honourable representing of a firm stateliness." "The servants not so many in number as cleanly in apparel and serviceable

in behaviour, testifying even in their countenances that their master took as well care to be served as of them that did serve."

Perhaps Sidney, when he penned these sentences, thought of Penshurst. At any rate they remind us of Jonson's lines upon that venerable country seat. The pleasance, also, had the same charm of homeliness and ancient peace :—

"The backside of the house was neither field, garden, nor orchard ; or rather it was both field, garden, and orchard : for as soon as the descending of the stairs had delivered them down, they came into a place cunningly set with trees of the most taste-pleasing fruits : but scarcely had they taken that into their consideration, but that they were suddenly stepped into a delicate green ; of each side of the green a thicket, and behind the thickets again new beds of flowers, which being under the trees, the trees were to them a pavilion, and they to the trees a mosaical floor, so that it seemed that art therein would needs be delightful by counterfeiting his enemy error and making order in confusion."

Here Musidorus sojourned some while, until he happened to hear that his host's son, Clitophon, had been taken prisoner by the Helots, who were now in revolt against their Laconian masters. Musidorus begged permission to go to the young man's rescue ; and when he reached the rebels, he entered their walled city by a stratagem and began a deadly battle in the market-place. The engagement at first was general between the Helots and the Arcadians, but at length it resolved itself into a single combat, Musidorus attacking the leader of the Helots with all his might. This duel remained for some time equal and uncertain, when suddenly the brigand chief threw down his sword, exclaiming, "What ! hath

Palladius forgotten the voice of Daiphantus?" It should here be said that Pyrocles and Musidorus had agreed to call each other by these assumed names. A joyful recognition of course ensued. Pyrocles related the series of events by which he had been forced to head the rebels, after being captured by them. Clitophon was released, and all returned together to Arcadia.

At this point the love intrigue, which forms the main interest of what Milton called "the vain amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*," begins to unfold itself. An eccentric sovereign, Basilius, Prince of Arcadia, was married to an accomplished and beautiful woman, Gynecia. They had two daughters, Pamela the elder, and Philoclea the younger, equally matched in loveliness of mind and person, yet differing by subtle contrasts of their incomparable qualities. Basilius, in a fit of jealousy and suspicion, had left his palace, and was now residing with his wife and daughters in two rustic lodges, deep-embowered by the forest. Gynecia, Philoclea, and himself occupied one of these retreats. Pamela dwelt in the other, under the care of a clownish peasant family, consisting of Dametas, his hideous wife Miso, and their still more odious daughter Mopsa. It need not be related how Musidorus fell in love with Pamela and Pyrocles with Philoclea. In order to be near the ladies of their choice, the princes now assumed new names and strange disguises. Pyrocles donned Amazon's attire and called himself Zelmane. Musidorus became a shepherd and was known as Dorus. Both contrived to win the affections of the princesses, but meanwhile they got entangled in embarrassing and dangerous complications. Dorus had to feign love for the disgusting Mopsa. Zel-

mane was persecuted by the passion of both Basilius and Gynecia; Basilius deeming him a woman, Gynecia recognising a man through his disguise. When Milton condemned the *Arcadia* as "a book in that kind full of mirth and witty, but among religious thoughts and duties not worthy to be named, nor to be read at any time without due caution," he was assuredly justified by the unpleasant situation created for Zelmane. A young man, travestied as a girl, in love with a princess, and at the same time harassed by the wanton solicitations of both her father and her mother, is, to say the least, a very risky subject for romance. Yet Sidney treated it with sufficient delicacy, and contrived in the end to bring both Basilius and Gynecia to their senses. "Loathsomely loved and dangerously loving," Zelmane remained long in this entanglement; but when he and Philoclea eventually attained their felicity in marriage, both of them concealed Gynecia's error. And she "did, in the remnant of her life, duly purchase [their good opinion] with observing all duty and faith, to the example and glory of Greece; so uncertain are mortal judgments, the same person most infamous and most famous, and neither justly."

I have dwelt on this part of the story because it anticipates the plots of many Elizabethan dramas which turned upon confusions of sex, and to which the custom of boys acting female parts lent a curious complexity. If space allowed I might also follow the more comic fortunes of Dorus, and show how the tale of Amphialus (another lover of Philoclea) is interwoven with that of Pyrocles and Musidorus. This subordinate romance introduces one of the longest episodes of the work, when

Cecropia, the wicked mother of Amphialus, imprisons Zelmane, Philoclea, and Pamela together in her castle. It is during this imprisonment that Pamela utters the prayer made famous by the fact that Charles I. is supposed to have used it just before his execution. I will quote it here at length, both for its beauty of style and for the sake of this historical association :—

"O All-seeing Light and Eternal Life of all things, to whom nothing is either so great that it may resist, or so small that it is contemned ; look upon my misery with Thine eye of mercy, and let Thine infinite power vouchsafe to limit out some proportion of deliverance unto me, as to Thee shall seem most convenient. Let not injury, O Lord, triumph over me, and let my faults by Thy hand be corrected, and make not mine unjust enemy the minister of Thy justice. But yet, my God, if, in Thy wisdom, this be the aptest chastisement for my inexcusable folly, if this low bondage be fitted for my over high desires, if the pride of my not enough humble heart be thus to be broken, O Lord, I yield unto Thy will, and joyfully embrace what sorrow Thou wilt have me suffer. Only thus much let me crave of Thee : let my craving, O Lord, be accepted of Thee, since even that proceeds from Thee ; let me crave, even by the noblest title which in my greatest affliction I may give myself, that I am Thy creature, and by Thy goodness, which is Thyself, that Thou wilt suffer some beam of Thy majesty so to shine into my mind that it may still depend confidently on Thee. Let calamity be the exercise, but not the overthrow of my virtue ; let their power prevail, but prevail not to destruction. Let my greatness be their prey ; let my pain be the sweetness of their revenge ; let them, if so it seem good unto Thee, vex me with more and more punishment ; but, O Lord, let never their wickedness have such a hand but that I may carry a pure mind in a pure body."

Among the papers given to Bishop Juxon by Charles upon the scaffold was this prayer, slightly altered in

some particulars. His enemies made it a cause of reproach against him, especially Milton, in a memorable passage of "Iconoclastes," from which I have already quoted certain phrases. "Who would have imagined," writes the Latin secretary, "so little fear in him of the true all-seeing Deity, so little reverence of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to dictate and present our Christian prayers, so little care of truth in his last words, or honour to himself or to his friends, or sense of his afflictions, or that sad hour which was upon him, as immediately before his death to pop into the hand of that grave bishop who attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god; and that in no serious book, but in the vain amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia?*" Charles' defenders pointed out that the papers given to Juxon had been seized by the regicides, and accused them of foisting this prayer in on purpose to have the opportunity of traducing their victim to Puritan England. It is also noticeable that it does not appear in the first edition of *Eikon Basilikê*, nor in Dr. Earl's Latin version of that book. However the case may be, Dr. Johnson showed good sense when he wrote: "The use of it (the prayer) by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse."

Pamela's prayer has led me so far away from the intricacies of Sidney's *Arcadia* that I shall not return to further analyses of the fable. The chief merits of the book, as a whole, seem to be an almost inexhaustible variety of incidents, fairly correct character-drawing,

purity of feeling, abundance of sententious maxims, and great richness of colouring in the descriptive passages. Its immense popularity may be ascribed to the fact that nothing exactly like it had appeared in English literature; for *Euphues* is by no means so romantically interesting or so varied in material, while the novels of Greene are both shorter and more monotonous. The chivalrous or heroic incidents are so well combined with the sentimental, and these again are so prettily set against the pastoral background, that, given an appetite for romance of the kind, each reader found something to stimulate his curiosity and to provide him with amusement. The defects of the *Arcadia* are apparent; as, for instance, its lack of humour, the extravagance of many of its situations, the whimsicality of its conceits, and the want of solid human realism in its portraits. These defects were, however, no bar to its popularity in the sixteenth century; nor would they count as such at present were it not, as Dr. Zouch pertinently remarks, that "the taste, the manners, the opinions, the language of the English nation, have undergone a very great revolution since the reign of Queen Elizabeth." Such a revolution condemns all works of prose fiction which fascinated a bygone age, and which are not kept alive by humour and by solid human realism, to ever-gradually-deepening oblivion.

Before concluding this chapter there is another point of view under which the *Arcadia* must be considered. Sidney interspersed its prose with verses, after the model of Sannazzaro's pastoral, sometimes introducing them as occasion suggested into the mouths of his chief personages, and sometimes making them the subject of poetical disputes between the shepherds of the happy

country. Some of these poems are among the best which he composed. I would cite in particular the beautiful sonnet which begins and ends with this line: "My true love hath my heart, and I have his;" and another opening with—"Beauty hath force to catch the human sight." But what gives special interest to the verses scattered over the pages of *Arcadia* is that in a large majority of them Sidney put in practice the theories of the Areopagus. Thus we have English hexameters, elegiacs, sapphics, phaleuciacs or hendecasyllables, asclepiads, and anacreontics. I will present some specimens of each. Here then are hexameters:—

"Lady reserved by the heavens to do pastors' company honour,
Joining your sweet voice to the rural muse of a desert,
Here you fully do find this strange operation of love,
How to the woods love runs as well as rides to the palace;
Neither he bears reverence to a prince nor pity to beggar,
But (like a point in midst of a circle) is still of a nearness.
All to a lesson he draws, neither hills nor caves can avoid him."

One elegiac couplet will suffice:—

"Fortune, Nature, Love, long have contended about me,
Which should most miseries cast on a worm that I am."

Nor will it be needful to quote more than one sapphic stanza:—

"If mine eyes can speak to do hearty errand,
Or mine eyes' language she do hap to judge of,
So that eyes' message be of her receivèd,
Hope, we do live yet."

The hendecasyllables, though comparatively easy to

write in English, hobble in a very painful manner, as thus :—

> "Reason, tell me thy mind, if here be reason,
> In this strange violence to make resistance,
> Where sweet graces erect the stately banner
> Of virtue's regiment, shining in harness."

So do the asclepiads, which, however, are by no means so easy of execution :—

> "O sweet woods, the delight of solitariness !
> O how much I do like your solitariness !
> Where man's mind hath a freed consideration
> Of goodness to receive lovely direction ;
> Where senses do behold the order of heavenly host,
> And wise thoughts do behold what the Creator is."

The anacreontics, being an iambic measure, come off somewhat better, as may be judged by this transcript from a famous fragment of Sappho :—

> "My Muse, what ails this ardour ?
> Mine eyes be dim, my limbs shake,
> My voice is hoarse, my throat scorched,
> My tongue to this my roof cleaves,
> My fancy amazed, my thoughts dulled,
> My heart doth ache, my life faints,
> My soul begins to take leave."

It is obvious from these quotations that what the school called "our rude and beggarly rhyming" is not only more natural, but also more artistic than their "reformed verse." Indeed, it may be said without reserve that Sidney's experiments in classical metres have no poetical value whatsoever. They are only interesting as survivals from an epoch when the hexameter seemed to have an equal chance of survival with the decasyllabic

unrhymed iambic. The same is true about many of Sidney's attempts to acclimatise Italian forms of verse. Thus we find imbedded in the *Arcadia* terza rima and ottava rima, sestines and madrigals, a canzone in which the end of each line rhymes with a syllable in the middle of the next. So conscientious was he in the attempt to reproduce the most difficult Italian metres that he even attempted terza rima with *sdrucciolo* or trisyllabic rhymes. I will select an example :—

"If sunny beams shame heavenly habitation,
If three-leaved grass seem to the sheep unsavory,
Then base and sore is Love's most high vocation.
Or if sheep's cries can help the sun's own bravery,
Then may I hope my pipe may have ability
To help her praise who decks me in her slavery."

But enough of this. It has proved a difficult task to introduce terza rima at all into English literature; to make so exceptionally exacting a species of it as the *sdrucciolo* at all attractive, would almost be beyond the powers of Mr. Swinburne. The octave, as handled by Sidney, is passable, as will appear from the even flow of this stanza :—

"While thus they ran a low but levelled race,
While thus they lived (this was indeed a life !)
With nature pleased, content with present case,
Free of proud fears, brave beggary, smiting strife
Of clime-fall court, the envy-hatching place,
While those restless desires in great men rife
To visit folks so low did much disdain,
This while, though poor, they in themselves did reign."

Of the sestines I will not speak. That form has always seemed to me tedious even in the hands of the

most expert Italian masters; and Sidney was not the sort of poet to add grace to its formality by any sprightliness of treatment. It should be noticed that some of the songs in the *Arcadia* are put into the mouth of a sad shepherd who is Sidney himself. Phillisides (for so he has chosen to Latinise the first syllables of his Christian and surnames) appears late in the romance, and prepares us to expect the higher poetry of *Astrophel and Stella*.

CHAPTER V

LIFE AT COURT AGAIN, AND MARRIAGE

WHILE Philip was in retirement at Wilton two events of interest happened. His nephew, William Herbert, saw the light upon the 28th of April; and Edmund Spenser left England for Ireland as secretary to the new Viceroy, Lord Grey of Wilton. The birth of the future Earl of Pembroke forcibly reminds us of Sidney's position in the history of English literature. This baby in the cradle was destined to be Shakespeare's friend and patron; possibly also to inspire the sonnets which a publisher inscribed in Shakespeare's name to Master W. H. We are wont to regard those enigmatical compositions as the product of Shakespeare's still uncertain manhood. But William Herbert was yet a child when his uncle Philip's life-work ended. *Astrophel and Stella* had circulated among its author's private friends for at least four years when Zutphen robbed England of her poet-hero. At that date little Herbert, for whom Shakespeare subsequently wrote the lines—

> "Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;
> What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?"—

this little Herbert was but in his seventh year.

It is also possible, but not probable, that, while Philip was away in Wiltshire, his half-affianced bride, the daughter of the Earl of Essex, gave her hand to another suitor. Her guardian, the Earl of Huntingdon, wrote upon the 10th of March, in 1580, to Lord Burleigh, that he considered Lord Rich "a proper gentleman, and one in years very fit for my Lady Penelope Devereux, if, with the favour and liking of her Majesty, the matter might be brought to pass." Lord Rich certainly married Penelope Devereux; but whether it was in 1580, or rather in 1581, admits of discussion. To fix the exact date of her betrothal is a matter of some moment. I must therefore point out that, at that time in England, the commencement of the year dated officially from March 25. In private correspondence, however, the 1st of January had already begun to mark the opening of a new year. Privately, then, Lord Huntingdon's letter may have carried the date, 1580, as we understand it; but, officially, it must have been reckoned into the year which we call 1581. Now this letter is endorsed by Burleigh or his secretary, officially, under the year 1580; and, therefore, we have a strong presumption in favour of Penelope's not having been engaged to Lord Rich until 1581, seeing that the month of March in 1580 counted then for our month of March in 1581. When I review *Astrophel and Stella* it will appear that I do not attach very great importance to this question of dates. But I think it safer, on the evidence, to place Stella's marriage in the spring or summer of 1581.

Lord Rich was the son of the Lord Chancellor of England, who had lately died, bequeathing to his heir a very substantial estate, and a large portion of his own

coarse temperament. If we may trust the Earl of Devonshire's emphatic statement, made some twenty-five years later to King James, this marriage was not to the mind of the lady. He says that Penelope, "being in the power of her friends, was married against her will unto one against whom she did protest at the solemnity and ever after; between whom, from the very first day, there ensued continual discord, although the same fears that forced her to marry constrained her to live with him." I may here remind my readers of her subsequent history. During her husband's lifetime she left him and became the mistress of Sir Charles Blount, to whom she bore three children out of wedlock. He advanced to the peerage with the inherited title of Lord Mountjoy, and was later on created Earl of Devonshire; while Lady Rich, in spite of her questionable conduct, received, by patent, the dignity and precedence of the most ancient Earldom of Essex. Having been divorced from Lord Rich, she was afterwards at liberty to marry her lover; and in 1605 she became the Countess of Devonshire. James refused to countenance the nuptials. He had tolerated the previous illicit connection. But his opinions upon divorce made him regard its legalisation with indignant horror. Stella died in 1607 a disgraced woman, her rights of wifehood and widowhood remaining unrecognised.

In the course of the summer (1580), Leicester left his retirement and returned to Court. It was understood that though still not liking the French match, he would in future offer no opposition to the queen's wishes; and on these terms he induced Philip also to make his peace with her Majesty. We find him, accordingly,

again in London before the autumn. Two of the longest private letters from his pen may be referred to this period. They are addressed to his brother Robert Sidney, who afterwards became Lord Leicester. This young man was then upon his travels, spending more money than his father's distressed circumstances could well afford. Philip sent him supplies, using language of great delicacy and warm brotherly affection: "For the money you have received, assure yourself (for it is true) there is nothing I spend so pleaseth me, as that which is for you. If ever I have ability, you will find it; if not, yet shall not any brother living be better beloved than you of me." "For £200 a year, assure yourself, if the estates of England remain, you shall not fail of it; use it to your best profit." Where Philip found the money may be wondered; but that he gave it with good grace is unquestionable. Probably he received more from the queen in allowances than we are aware of; for he ranked among the favoured courtiers then known as "pensioners." As was the fashion of those times, he lectured his brother somewhat pompously on how to use the opportunities of the grand tour. Robert was constantly to observe the "virtue, passion, and vices" of the foreign countries through which he travelled.

"Even in the Kingdom of China, which is almost as far as the Antipodes from us, their good laws and customs are to be learned; but to know their riches and power is of little purpose for us, since that can neither advance nor hinder us. But in our neighbour countries, both these things are to be marked, as well the latter, which contain things for themselves, as the former, which seek to know both those, and how their riches and power may be to us available, or otherwise. The countries fittest for both these are those you are

going into. France is above all other most needful for us to mark, especially in the former kind; next is Spain and the Low Countries; then Germany, which in my opinion excels all others as much in the latter consideration, as the other doth in the former, yet neither are void of neither; for as Germany, methinks, doth excel in good laws, and well administering of justice, so are we likewise to consider in it the many princes with whom we may have league, the places of trade, and means to draw both soldiers and furniture thence in time of need. So on the other side, as in France and Spain, we are principally to mark how they stand towards us both in power and inclination; so are they not without good and fitting use, even in the generality of wisdom to be known. As in France, the courts of parliament, their subaltern jurisdiction, and their continual keeping of paid soldiers. In Spain, their good and grave proceedings; their keeping so many provinces under them, and by what manner, with the true points of honour; wherein since they have the most open conceit, if they seem over curious, it is an easy matter to cut off when a man sees the bottom. Flanders likewise, besides the neighbourhood with us, and the annexed considerations thereunto, hath divers things to be learned, especially their governing their merchants and other trades. Also for Italy, we know not what we have, or can have, to do with them, but to buy their silks and wines; and as for the other point, except Venice, whose good laws and customs we can hardly proportion to ourselves, because they are quite of a contrary government; there is little there but tyrannous oppression, and servile yielding to them that have little or no right over them. And for the men you shall have there, although indeed some be excellently learned, yet are they all given to counterfeit learning, as a man shall learn among them more false grounds of things than in any place else that I know; for from a tapster upwards, they are all discoursers in certain matters and qualities, as horsemanship, weapons, painting, and such are better there than in other countries; but for other matters, as well, if not better, you shall have them in nearer places."

The second of the two epistles (dated from Leicester

House, Oct. 18, 1580), contains more personal matter. "Look to your diet, sweet Robin," he says, "and hold up your heart in courage and virtue; truly great part of my comfort is in you." And again: "Now, sweet brother, take a delight to keep and increase your music; you will not believe what a want I find of it in my melancholy times." It appears, then, that Philip, unlike many gentlemen of that age, could not touch the lute or teach the "saucy jacks" of the virginal to leap in measure. Then follows another bit of playful exhortation: "I would by the way your worship would learn a better hand; you write worse than I, and I write evil enough; once again have a care of your diet, and consequently of your complexion; remember *Gratior est veniens in pulchro corpore virtus.*" If Ben Jonson was right in what he said of Philip's complexion, this advice had its ground in tiresome experience. On the subject of manly exercises he has also much to say: "At horsemanship, when you exercise it, read Crison Claudio, and a book that is called *La Gloria del Cavallo*, withal that you may join the thorough contemplation of it with the exercise; and so shall you profit more in a month than others in a year; and mark the bitting, saddling, and curing of horses."

"When you play at weapons, I would have you get thick caps and brasers, and play out your play lustily, for indeed ticks and dalliances are nothing in earnest, for the time of the one and the other greatly differs; and use as well the blow as the thrust; it is good in itself, and besides exerciseth your breath and strength, and will make you a strong man at the tourney and barriers. First, in any case practise the single sword, and then with the dagger; let no day pass without an hour or two such exercise; the rest study, or confer dili-

gently, and so shall you come home to my comfort and credit."

Studies come in for their due share of attention. "Take delight likewise in the mathematicals; Mr. Savile is excellent in them. I think you understand the sphere; if you do, I care little for any more astronomy in you. Arithmetic and geometry I would wish you were well seen in, so as both in matters of number and measure you might have a feeling and active judgment. I would you did bear the mechanical instruments, wherein the Dutch excel." It may be said with reference to this paragraph that Mr. Savile was Robert Sidney's travelling governor. The sphere represented medieval astronomy. Based upon the traditional interpretation of the Ptolemaic doctrine, it lent itself to theoretical disquisitions upon cosmology in general, as well as to abstruse speculations regarding the locality of paradise and heaven, the elements, and superhuman existences. On the point of style Philip observes: "So you can speak and write Latin, not barbarously, I never require great study in Ciceronianism, the chief abuse of Oxford, *qui dum verba sectantur res ipsas negligunt.*" History being Robert Sidney's favourite study, his brother discourses on it more at large.

I have quoted thus liberally from Philip's letters to Robert Sidney, because of the agreeable light they cast upon his character. It is clear they were not penned for perusal by the public. "My eyes are almost closed up, overwatched with tedious business," says the writer; and his last words are, "Lord! how I have babbled." Yet, though hastily put together, and somewhat incoherently expressed, the thoughts are of excellent pith; and one

passage upon history, in particular, reads like a rough sketch for part of the "Defence of Poesy."

After weighing the unaffected words of brotherly counsel and of affectionate interest which Philip sent across the sea to Robert, we are prepared for Sir Henry Sidney's warm panegyric of his first-born to his second son. He had indeed good hopes of Robert; but he built more on Philip, as appears from the following sentence in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham: "I having three sons, one of excellent good proof, the second of great good proof, and the third not to be despaired of, but very well to be liked." Therefore he frequently exhorted Robert to imitate the qualities of his "best brother." "*Perge, perge*, my Robin, in the filial fear of God, and in the meanest imagination of yourself, and to the loving direction of your most loving brother. Imitate his virtues, exercises, studies, and actions. He is the rare ornament of this age, the very formular that all well disposed young gentlemen of our Court do form also their manners and life by. In truth I speak it without flattery of him or of myself; he hath the most rare virtues that ever I found in any man. Once again I say imitate him." And once more, at a later date: "Follow your discreet and virtuous brother's rule, who with great discretion, to his great commendation, won love, and could variously ply ceremony with ceremony."

The last extant letter of Languet to Philip was written in October of this year. The old man congratulates his friend upon returning to the Court; but he adds a solemn warning against its idleness and dissipations. Familiarity with English affairs confirmed his bad opinion of Elizabeth's Court circle. He saw that

she was arbitrary in her distribution of wealth and honours; he feared lest Philip's merits should be ignored, while some more worthless favourite was being pampered. Once he had hoped that his service of the queen would speedily advance him to employment in public affairs. Now he recognised the possibility of that young hopeful life being wasted upon formalities and pastimes; and for England he prophesied a coming time of factions, complicated by serious foreign troubles. It is the letter of a saddened man, slowly declining towards the grave, amid forebodings which the immediate future of Europe only too well justified. Languet had now just eleven months more to live. He died in September 1581 at Antwerp, nursed through his last illness by the wife of his noble friend Philip du Plessis Mornay, and followed to the tomb by William, Prince of Orange. Among the poems given to Phillisides in the *Arcadia* is one which may perhaps have been written about the time when Languet's death had brought to Philip's memory the debt of gratitude he owed this faithful counsellor:—

"The song I sang old Languet had me taught,
Languet the shepherd best swift Ister knew
For clerkly reed, and hating what is naught,
For faithful heart, clean hands, and mouth as true;
With his sweet skill my skilless youth he drew
To have a feeling taste of Him that sits
Beyond the heaven, far more beyond our wits.

"He said the music best thilk powers pleased
Was sweet accord between our wit and will,
Where highest notes to godliness are raised,
And lowest sink not down to jot of ill;
With old true tales he wont mine ears to fill,
How shepherds did of yore, how now they thrive,
Spoiling their flocks, or while 'twixt them they strive.

"He likèd me, but pitied lustful youth ;
His good strong staff my slippery years upbore ;
He still hoped well because I lovèd truth ;
Till forced to part, with heart and eyes even sore,
To worthy Corydon he gave me o'er."

On New Year's Day, 1581, Philip presented the queen with a heart of gold, a chain of gold, and a whip with a golden handle. These gifts symbolised his devotion to her, and her right to chastise him. The year is marked in his biography by his first entrance into Parliament, as knight of the shire for Kent. He only sat two months; but during that short period he joined the committees appointed to frame rules for enforcing laws against Catholics, and for suppressing seditious practices by word or deed against her Majesty. The French match was still uppermost in Elizabeth's mind. She hankered after it ; and some of the wisest heads in Europe, among them William the Silent, approved of the project. Yet she was unable to decide. The Duke of Anjou had raised questions as to the eventuality of England becoming dependent on the French Crown ; which it might have been, if he had married the Queen, and succeeded to his childless brother. This made her pause and reflect. She was, moreover, debating the scheme of an alliance with Henri III. against Spain. Between the two plans her mind wavered. As Walsingham wrote to Burleigh: "When her Majesty is pressed to the marriage, then she seemeth to affect a league ; and when the league is yielded to, then she liketh better a marriage ; and when thereupon she is moved to assent to marriage, then she hath recourse to the league ; and when the motion is for the league, or any request is

made for money, then her Majesty returneth to the marriage."

These hesitations seem to have been augmented by the urgency of the French Court. On the 16th of April Francis of Bourbon arrived from Paris at the head of a magnificent embassy, with the avowed object of settling preliminaries. They were received with due honour by the principle nobles of Elizabeth's Court, all open opposition to the marriage having now been withdrawn by common consent. Among the entertainments provided for the envoys during their sojourn in London, Philip played a conspicuous part. Together with the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, and Fulke Greville, he prepared a brilliant display of chivalry. Calling themselves the Four Foster Children of Desire, they pledged their word to attack and win, if possible, by force of arms, the Fortress of Perfect Beauty. This fort, which was understood to be the allegorical abode of the queen, was erected in the Tilt Yard at Whitehall. Seven times the number of the challengers, young gentlemen of knightly prowess, offered themselves as defenders of the fortress; and it was quite clear from the first how the tournament would end. This foregone conclusion did not, however, mar the sport; and the compliment intended to Elizabeth would have been spoiled, if the Foster Children of Desire could have forced their way into her Castle of Beauty. The assault upon the Fortress of Perfect Beauty began on the 15th of May and was continued on the 16th, when the challengers acknowledged their defeat. They submitted their capitulation to the queen, by the mouth of a lad, attired in ash-coloured clothes, and bearing an olive-branch. From the detailed

accounts which survive of the event, I will only transcribe what serves to bring Philip Sidney and his train before us. The passage describes his entrance on the first day of the lists:—

"Then proceeded Master Philip Sidney in very sumptuous manner, with armour, part blue and the rest gilt and engraven, with four spare horses, having caparisons and furniture very rich and costly, as some of cloth of gold embroidered with pearl, and some embroidered with gold and silver feathers, very richly and cunningly wrought. He had four pages that rode on his four spare horses, who had cassock coats and Venetian hose, all of cloth of silver, laied with gold lace, and hats of the same with gold bands and white feathers, and each one a pair of white buskins. Then had he thirty gentlemen and yeomen, and four trumpeters, who were all in cassock coats and Venetian hose of yellow velvet laied with silver lace, yellow velvet caps with silver bands and white feathers, and every one a pair of white buskins; and they had upon their coats a scroll or band of silver, which came scarf-wise over the shoulder, and so down under the arm, with this posy or sentence written upon it, both before and behind: *Sic nos non nobis.*"

It behoves us not to ask, but we cannot help wondering, where the money came from for this costly show. Probably Philip was getting into debt. His appeals to friends with patronage at their disposal became urgent during the ensuing months. Though he obtained no post which combined public duties with pay, a sinecure worth £120 a year was given him. It must be said to his credit that he did not so much desire unearned money as some lucrative appointment, entailing labour and responsibility. This the queen would not grant; even an application made by him so late as the summer of 1583, begging for employment at the Ordnance under

his uncle Warwick, was refused. Meanwhile his European reputation brought invitations, which prudence bade him reject. One of these arrived from Don Antonio of Portugal, a bastard pretender to that kingdom, calling upon Philip Sidney to join his forces. The life at Court, onerous by reason of its expenditure, tedious through indolence and hope deferred, sweetened chiefly by the companionship of Greville and Dyer, wore tiresomely on. And over all these months wavered the fascinating vision of Stella, now a wife, to whom Phillisides was paying ardent homage. It may well be called a dangerous passage in his short life, the import of which we shall have to fathom when we take up *Astrophel and Stella* for perusal. Courtly monotony had its distractions. The French match, for instance, afforded matter for curiosity and mild excitement. This reached its climax when the Duke of Anjou arrived in person. He came in November, and stayed three months. When he left England in February 1582, the world knew that this project of a marriage for Elizabeth was at an end. Sidney, with the flower of English aristocracy, attended the French prince to Antwerp. There he was proclaimed Duke of Brabant, and welcomed with shows of fantastic magnificence. We may dismiss all further notice of him from the present work, with the mention of his death in 1584. It happened on the first of June, preceding the Prince of Orange's assassination by just one month. People thought that Anjou also had been murdered.

The greater part of the year 1582 is a blank in Philip's biography. We only know that he was frequently absent from the Court, and in attendance on his

father. Sir Henry Sidney's affairs were seriously involved. The Crown refused him substantial aid, and kept him to his post at Ludlow Castle. Yet, at the beginning of 1583, we find Philip again in waiting on the queen; presenting her with a golden flower-pot, and receiving the gracious gift of a lock of the royal virgin's hair. In January Prince Casimir had to be installed Knight of the Garter. Philip was chosen as his proxy, and obtained the honour of knighthood for himself. Henceforward he takes rank as Sir Philip Sidney of Penshurst.

Never thoroughly at ease in courtly idleness, Philip formed the habit of turning his eyes westward, across the ocean, towards those new continents where wealth and boundless opportunities of action lay ready for adventurous knights. Frobisher's supposed discovery of gold in 1577 drew an enthusiastic letter from him. In 1578 he was meditating some "Indian project." In 1580 he wrote wistfully to his brother Robert about Drake's return, "of which yet I know not the secret points; but about the world he hath been, and rich he is returned." In 1582 his college friend, Richard Hakluyt, inscribed the first collection of his *Voyages* with Sidney's name. All things pointed in the direction of his quitting England for the New World, if a suitable occasion should present itself, and if the queen should grant him her consent. During the spring of 1583 projects for colonisation, or plantation as it then was termed, were afloat among the west country gentlefolk. Sir Humphrey Gilbert and his half-brother Walter Raleigh, with Sir George Peckham and others, thought of renewing the attempts they had already made in

1578. Elizabeth in that year had signed her first charter of lands to be explored beyond the seas, in favour of Sir Humphrey Gilbert; and now she gave a second to Sir Philip Sidney. It licensed and authorised him

"To discover, search, find out, view, and inhabit certain parts of America not yet discovered, and out of those countries, by him, his heirs, factors, or assignees, to have and enjoy, to him, his heirs, and assignees for ever, such and so much quantity of ground as shall amount to the number of thirty hundred thousand acres of ground and wood, with all commodities, jurisdictions, and royalties, both by sea and land, with full power and authority that it should and might be lawful for the said Sir Philip Sidney, his heirs and assignees, at all times thereafter to have, take, and lead in the same voyage, to travel thitherwards or to inhabit there with him or them, and every or any of them, such and so many her Majesty's subjects as should willingly accompany him and them and every or any of them, with sufficient shipping and furniture for their transportation."

In other words, her Majesty granted to Sir Philip Sidney the pretty little estate of three millions of acres in North America. It is true that the land existed, so to say, *in nubibus*, and was by no means sure to prove an El Dorado. It was far more sure that if the grantee got possession of it, he would have to hold it by his own strength; for Britain, at this epoch, was not pledged to support her colonies. Yet considering the present value of the soil in Virginia or New England, the mere fantastic row of seven figures in American acres, so lightly signed away by her Majesty, is enough to intoxicate the imagination. How Philip managed to extort or wheedle this charter from Elizabeth we have no means of knowing. She was exceedingly jealous of

her courtiers, and would not willingly lose sight of them. When Philip two years later engaged himself in a colonising expedition, we shall see that she positively forbade him to leave England. Now, however, it is probable she knew that he could not take action on her gift. She was merely bestowing an interest in speculations which cost her nothing and might bring him profit. At any rate, the matter took this turn. In July 1583 he executed a deed relinquishing 30,000 acres, together with "all royalties, titles, pre-eminences, privileges, liberties, and dignities," which the queen's grant carried, to his friend Sir George Peckham.

The reason of this act of resignation was that Philip had pledged his hand in marriage to Frances, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. So far back as December 1581 there are indications that his friendship with Walsingham and his family was ripening into something more intimate. We do not know the date of his marriage for certain; but it is probable that he was already a husband before the month of July.

A long letter addressed in March 1583 by Sir Henry Sidney to Walsingham must here be used, since it throws the strongest light upon the circumstances of the Sidney family, and illustrates Sir Henry's feeling with regard to his son's marriage. The somewhat discontented tone which marks its opening is, I think, rather apologetical than regretful. Sir Henry felt that, on both sides, the marriage was hardly a prudent one. He had expected some substantial assistance from the Crown through Walsingham's mediation. This had not been granted; and he took the opportunity of again laying a succinct report of his past services and present

necessities before the secretary of state, in the hope that something might yet be done to help him. The document opens as follows:—

"Dear Sir—I have understood of late that coldness is thought in me in proceeding in the matter of marriage of our children. In truth, sir, it is not so, nor so shall it ever be found; for compremitting the consideration of the articles to the Earls named by you, and to the Earl of Huntingdon, I most willingly agree, and protest, and joy in the alliance with all my heart. But since, by your letters of the 3d of January, to my great discomfort I find there is no hope of relief of her Majesty for my decayed estate in her Highness' service, I am the more careful to keep myself able, by sale of part of that which is left, to ransom me out of the servitude I live in for my debts; for as I know, sir, that it is the virtue which is, or that you suppose is, in my son, that you made choice of him for your daughter, refusing haply far greater and far richer matches than he, so was my confidence great that by your good means I might have obtained some small reasonable suit of her Majesty; and therefore I nothing regarded any present gain, for if I had, I might have received a great sum of money for my good will of my son's marriage, greatly to the relief of my private biting necessity."

After this exordium, Sir Henry takes leave to review his actions as Viceroy of Ireland and Governor of Wales, with the view of showing how steadfastly he had served his queen and how ill he had been recompensed.

"Three times her Majesty hath sent me her Deputy into Ireland, and in every of the three times I sustained a great and a violent rebellion, every one of which I subdued, and (with honourable peace) left the country in quiet. I returned from each of these three Deputations three hundred pounds worse than I went."

It would be impertinent to the subject of this essay

were I to follow Sir Henry in the minute and interesting account of his Irish administration. Suffice it to say that the letter to Walsingham is both the briefest and the most material statement of facts which we possess regarding that period of English rule. Omitting then all notice of public affairs, I pass on to confidences of a more personal character. After dwelling upon sundry embassies and other employments, he proceeds:—

"Truly, sir, by all these I neither won nor saved; but now, by your patience, once again to my great and high office—for great it is in that in some sort I govern the third part of this realm under her most excellent Majesty; high it is, for by that I have precedency of great personages and far my betters: happy it is for the people whom I govern, as before is written, and most happy for the commodity that I have by the authority of that place to do good every day, if I have grace, to one or other; wherein I confess I feel no small felicity; but for any profit I gather by it, God and the people (seeing my manner of life) knoweth it is not possible how I should gather any.

"For, alas, sir! how can I, not having one groat of pension belonging to the office? I have not so much ground as will feed a mutton. I sell no justice, I trust you do not hear of any order taken by me ever reversed, nor my name or doings in any court ever brought in question. And if my mind were so base and contemptible as I would take money of the people whom I command for my labour taken among them, yet could they give me none, or very little, for the causes that come before me are causes of people mean, base, and many very beggars. Only £20 a week to keep an honourable house, and 100 marks a year to bear foreign charges, I have; . . . but true books of account shall be, when you will, showed unto you that I spend above £30 a week. Here some may object that I upon the same keep my wife and her followers. True it is she is now with me, and hath been this half year, and before not in many years; and if both she and I had our food and house-room free, as we

have not, in my conscience we have deserved it. For my part, I am not idle, but every day I work in my function; and she, for her old service, and marks yet remaining in her face taken in the same, meriteth her meat. When I went to Newhaven I left her a full fair lady, in mine eye at least the fairest; and when I returned I found her as foul a lady as the small-pox could make her, which she did take by continual attendance of her Majesty's most precious person (sick of the same disease), the scars of which, to her resolute discomfort, ever since have done and doth remain in her face, so as she liveth solitarily, *sicut nicticorax in domicilio suo*, more to my charge than if we had boarded together, as we did before that evil accident happened."

The epistle ends with a general review of Sir Henry's pecuniary situation, by which it appears that the Sidney estate had been very considerably impoverished during his tenure of it.

"The rest of my life is with an over-long precedent discourse manifested to you. But this to your little comfort I cannot omit, that whereas my father had but one son, and he of no great proof, being of twenty-four years of age at his death, and I having three sons; one of excellent good proof, the second of great good proof, and the third not to be despaired of, but very well to be liked; if I die to-morrow next I should leave them worse than my father left me by £20,000; and I am now fifty-four years of age, toothless and trembling, being £5000 in debt, yea, and £30,000 worse than I was at the death of my most dear king and master, King Edward VI.

"I have not of the crown of England of my own getting, so much ground as I can cover with my foot. All my fees amount not to 100 marks a year. I never had since the queen's reign any extraordinary aid by license, forfeit, or otherwise. And yet for all that was done, and somewhat more than here is written, I cannot obtain to have in fee-farm £100 a year, already in my own possession, paying the rent.

"And now, dear sir and brother, an end of this tragical

discourse, tedious for you to read, but more tedious it would have been if it had come written with my own hand, as first it was. Tragical I may well term it; for that it began with the joyful love and great liking with likelihood of matrimonial match between our most dear and sweet children (whom God bless), and endeth with declaration of my unfortunate and hard estate.

"Our Lord bless you with long life and happiness. I pray you, sir, commend me most heartily to my good lady, cousin, and sister, your wife, and bless and kiss our sweet daughter. And if you will vouchsafe, bestow a blessing upon the young knight, Sir Philip."

There is not much to say of Philip's bride. He and she lived together as man and wife barely three years. Nothing remains to prove that she was either of assistance to him or the contrary. After his death she contracted a secret marriage with Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex; and when she lost this second husband on the scaffold, she adopted the Catholic religion and became the wife of Lord Clanricarde. In this series of events I can see nothing to her discredit, considering the manners of that century. Her daughter by Philip, it is known, made a brilliant marriage with the Earl of Rutland. Her own repeated nuptials may be taken to prove her personal attractiveness. Sir Philip Sidney, who must have been intimately acquainted with her character, chose her for his wife while his passion for Penelope Devereux had scarcely cooled; and he did so without the inducements which wealth or brilliant fortunes might have offered.

CHAPTER VI

"ASTROPHEL AND STELLA"

AMONG Sidney's miscellaneous poems there is a lyric, which has been supposed, not without reason, I think, to express his feelings upon the event of Lady Penelope Devereux's marriage to Lord Rich.

"Ring out your bells, let mourning shows be spread;
For Love is dead:
All love is dead, infected
With plague of deep disdain:
Worth, as naught worth, rejected,
And faith fair scorn doth gain.
From so ungrateful fancy,
From such a female frenzy,
From them that use men thus,
Good Lord, deliver us!

"Weep, neighbours, weep; do you not hear it said
That Love is dead?
His death-bed, peacock's folly;
His winding-sheet is shame;
His will, false-seeming holy;
His sole executor, blame.
From so ungrateful fancy,
From such a female frenzy,
From them that use men thus,
Good Lord, deliver us!

"Alas! I lie: rage hath this error bred;
Love is not dead;
Love is not dead, but sleepeth
In her unmatchèd mind,
Where she his counsel keepeth
Till due deserts she find.
Therefore from so vile fancy,
To call such wit a frenzy,
Who Love can temper thus,
Good Lord, deliver us!"

These stanzas sufficiently set forth the leading passion of *Astrophel and Stella*. That series of poems celebrates Sir Philip Sidney's love for Lady Rich after her marriage, his discovery that this love was returned, and the curb which her virtue set upon his too impetuous desire. Before the publication of Shakespeare's sonnets, these were undoubtedly the finest love poems in our language; and though exception may be taken to the fact that they were written for a married woman, their purity of tone and philosophical elevation of thought separate them from the vulgar herd of amatorious verses.

I have committed myself to the opinion that *Astrophel and Stella* was composed, if not wholly, yet in by far the greater part, after Lady Rich's marriage. This opinion being contrary to the judgment of excellent critics, and opposed to the wishes of Sidney's admirers, I feel bound to state my reasons. In the first place, then, the poems would have no meaning if they were written for a maiden. When a friend, quite early in the series, objects to Sidney that

"Desire
Doth plunge my well-formed soul even in the mire
Of sinful thoughts which do in ruin end,"

what significance could these words have if Stella were still free? Stella, throughout two-thirds of the series (after No. xxxiii.), makes no concealment of her love for Astrophel; and yet she persistently repels his ardent wooing. Why should she have done so, if she was at liberty to obey her father's deathbed wish and marry him? It may here be objected that the reasons for the breaking off of her informal engagement to Sidney are not known; both he and she were possibly conscious that the marriage could not take place. To this I answer that a wife's refusal of a lover's advances differs from a maiden's; and Stella's refusal in the poems is clearly, to my mind at least, that of a married woman. Sidney, moreover, does not hint at unkind fate or true love hindered in its course by insurmountable obstacles. He has, on the other hand, plenty to say about the unworthy husband, Stella's ignoble bondage, and Lord Rich's jealousy.

But, it has been urged, we are not sure that we possess the sonnets and songs of *Astrophel and Stella* in their right order. May we not conjecture that they were either purposely or unintelligently shuffled by the publisher, who surreptitiously obtained copies of the loose sheets? And again, will not close inspection of the text reveal local and temporal allusions, by means of which we shall be able to assign some of the more compromising poems to dates before Penelope's marriage?

There are two points here for consideration, which I will endeavour to treat separately. The first edition of *Astrophel and Stella* was printed in 1591 by Thomas Newman. Where this man obtained his manuscript

does not appear. But in the dedication he says: "It was my fortune not many days since to light upon the famous device of *Astrophel and Stella*, which carrying the general commendation of all men of judgment, and being reported to be one of the rarest things that ever any Englishman set abroach, I have thought good to publish it." Further on he adds: "For my part I have been very careful in the printing of it, and whereas, being spread abroad in written copies, it had gathered much corruption by ill-writers; I have used their help and advice in correcting and restoring it to his first dignity that I know were of skill and experience in those matters." If these sentences have any meaning, it is that *Astrophel and Stella* circulated widely in manuscript, as a collected whole, and not in scattered sheets, before it fell into the hands of Newman. It was already known to the world as a "famous device," a "rare thing;" and throughout the dedication it is spoken of as a single piece. What strengthens this argument is that the Countess of Pembroke, in her lifetime, permitted *Astrophel and Stella* to be reprinted, together with her own corrected version of the *Arcadia*, without making any alteration in its arrangement.

If we examine the poems with minute attention we shall, I think, be led to the conclusion that they have not been shuffled, but that we possess them in the order in which Sidney wrote them. To begin with, the first nine sonnets form a kind of exordium. They set forth the object for which the whole series was composed, they celebrate Stella's mental and personal charms in general, they characterise Sidney's style and source of inspiration, and criticise the affectations of his

contemporaries. In the second place, we find that many of the sonnets are written in sequence. I will cite, for example, Nos. 31-34, Nos. 38-40, Nos. 69-72, Nos. 87-92, Nos. 93-100. Had the order been either unintelligently or intentionally confused, it is not probable that these sequences would have survived entire. And upon this point I may notice that the interspersed lyrics occur in their proper places—that is to say, in close connection with the subject-matter of accompanying sonnets. It may thirdly be observed that *Astrophel and Stella*, as we have it, exhibits a natural rhythm and development of sentiment, from admiration and chagrin, through expectant passion, followed by hope sustained at a high pitch of enthusiasm, down to eventual discouragement and resignation. As Thomas Nash said in his preface to the first edition: "The chief actor here is Melpomene, whose dusky robes dipped in the ink of tears as yet seem to drop when I see them near. The argument cruel chastity, the prologue hope, the epilogue despair." That the series ends abruptly, as though its author had abandoned it from weariness, should also be noticed. This is natural in the case of lyrics, which were clearly the outpouring of the poet's inmost feelings. When he had once determined to cast off the yoke of a passion which could not but have been injurious to his better self, Astrophel stopped singing. He was not rounding off a subject artistically contemplated from outside. There was no envoy to be written when once the aliment of love had been abandoned.

With regard to the second question I have raised, namely, whether close inspection will not enable us to fix dates for the composition of *Astrophel and Stella*,

and thus to rearrange the order of its pieces, I must say that very few of the poems seem to me to offer any solid ground for criticism of this kind. Sonnets 24, 35, and 37 clearly allude to Stella's married name. Sonnet 41, the famous "Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance," may refer to Sidney's assault upon the Castle of Perfect Beauty; but since he was worsted in that mimic siege, this seems doubtful. The mention of "that sweet enemy France" might lead us equally well to assign it to the period of Anjou's visit. In either case, the date would be after Stella's betrothal to Lord Rich. Sonnet 30, "Whether the Turkish new moon minded be," points to political events in Europe which were taking place after the beginning of 1581, and consequently about the period of Penelope's marriage. These five sonnets fall within the first forty-one of a series which numbers one hundred and eight. After them I can discover nothing but allusions to facts of private life, Astrophel's absence from the Court, Stella's temporary illness, a stolen kiss, a lover's quarrel.

In conclusion, I would fain point out that any one who may have composed a series of poems upon a single theme, extending over a period of many months, will be aware how impertinent it is for an outsider to debate their order. Nothing can be more certain, in such species of composition, than that thoughts once suggested will be taken up for more elaborate handling on a future occasion. Thus the contention between love and virtue, which occurs early in *Astrophel and Stella*, is developed at length toward its close. The Platonic conception of beauty is suggested near the commencement, and is worked out in a later sequence.

Sometimes a motive from external life supplies the poet with a single lyric, which seems to interrupt the lover's monologue. Sometimes he strikes upon a vein so fruitful that it yields a succession of linked sonnets and intercalated songs.

I have attempted to explain why I regard *Astrophel and Stella* as a single whole, the arrangement of which does not materially differ from that intended by its author. I have also expressed my belief that it was written after Penelope Devereux became Lady Rich. This justifies me in saying, as I did upon a former page, that the exact date of her marriage seems to me no matter of vital importance in Sir Philip Sidney's biography. My theory of the love which it portrays, is that this was latent up to the time of her betrothal, and that the consciousness of the irrevocable at that moment made it break into the kind of regretful passion which is peculiarly suited for poetic treatment. Stella may have wasted some of Philip's time; but it is clear that she behaved honestly, and to her lover helpfully, by the firm but gentle refusal of his overtures. Throughout these poems, though I recognise their very genuine emotion, I cannot help discerning the note of what may be described as poetical exaggeration. In other words, I do not believe that Sidney would in act have really gone so far as he professes to desire. On paper it was easy to demand more than seriously, in hot or cold blood, he would have attempted. To this artistic exaltation of a real feeling the chosen form of composition both traditionally and artistically lent itself. Finally, when all these points have been duly considered, we must not forget that society at that epoch was lenient, if not lax, in matters

of the passions. Stella's position at Court, while she was the acknowledged mistress of Sir Charles Blount, suffices to prove this; nor have we any reason to suppose that Philip was, in this respect, more "a spirit without spot" than his contemporaries. Some of his deathbed meditations indicate sincere repentance for past follies; but that his liaison with Lady Rich involved nothing worse than a young man's infatuation, appears from the pervading tone of *Astrophel and Stella*. A motto might be chosen for it from the 66th sonnet:

"I cannot brag of word, much less of deed."

The critical cobwebs which beset the personal romance of *Astrophel and Stella* have now been cleared away. Readers of these pages know how I for one interpret its problems. Whatever opinion they may form upon a topic which has exercised many ingenious minds, we are able at length to approach the work of art, and to study its beauties together. Regarding one point, I would fain submit a word of preliminary warning. However artificial and allusive may appear the style of these love poems, let us prepare ourselves to find real feeling and substantial thought expressed in them. It was not a mere rhetorical embroidery of phrases which moved downright Ben Jonson to ask:

"Hath not great Sidney Stella set
Where never star shone brighter yet?"

It was no flimsy string of pearled conceits which drew from Richard Crashaw in his most exalted moment that allusion to:

"Sydnaean showers
Of sweet discourse, whose powers
Can crown old Winter's head with flowers."

The elder poets, into whose ken *Astrophel and Stella* swam like a thing of unimagined and unapprehended beauty, had no doubt of its sincerity. The quaintness of its tropes and the condensation of its symbolism were proofs to them of passion stirring the deep soul of a finely-gifted, highly-educated man. They read it as we read *In Memoriam*, acknowledging some obscure passages, recognising some awkwardness of incoherent utterance, but taking these on trust as evidences of the poet's heart too charged with stuff for ordinary methods of expression. What did Shakespeare make Achilles say?

> "My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirred,
> And I myself see not the bottom of it."

Charles Lamb puts this point well. "The images which lie before our feet (though by some accounted the only natural) are least natural for the high Sydnaean love to express its fancies. They may serve for the love of Tibullus, or the dear author of the *Schoolmistress;* for passions that weep and whine in elegies and pastoral ballads. I am sure Milton (and Lamb might have added Shakespeare) never loved at this rate."

The forms adopted by Sidney in his *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets are various; but none of them correspond exactly to the Shakespearian type—three separate quatrains clinched with a final couplet. He adheres more closely to Italian models, especially in his handling of the octave; although we find only two specimens (Nos. 29, 94) of the true Petrarchan species in the treatment of the sextet. Sidney preferred to close the stanza with a couplet. The best and most characteristic of his compositions are built in this way: two quatrains upon a

pair of rhymes, arranged as *a*, *b*, *b*, *a*, *a*, *b*, *b*, *a*; followed by a quatrain *c*, *d*, *c*, *d*, and a couplet *e*, *e*. The pauses frequently occur at the end of the eighth line, and again at the end of the eleventh, so that the closing couplet is not abruptly detached from the structure of the sextet. It will be observed from the quotations which follow that this, which I indicate as the most distinctively Sidneyan type, is by no means invariable. To analyse each of the many schemes under which his sonnets can be arranged, would be unprofitable in a book which does not pretend to deal technically with this form of stanza. Yet I may add that he often employs a type of the sextet, which is commoner in French than in Italian or English poetry, with this rhyming order: *c*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *e*, *d*. I have counted twenty of this sort.

The first sonnet, which is composed in lines of twelve syllables, sets forth the argument:

"Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain,
Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burned brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
Invention, nature's child, fled step-dame study's blows;
Another's feet still seemed but stranger's in my way.
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite—
'Fool,' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write!'"

This means that Sidney's love was sincere; but that he first sought expression for it in phrases studied from famous models. He wished to please his lady, and to move her pity. His efforts proved ineffectual, until the Muse came and said: "Look in thy heart and write." Like Dante, Sidney then declared himself to be one:

> "Che quando,
> Amore spira, noto; ed a quel modo
> Ch'ei detta dentro, vo significando."
>
> *Purg.* 24. 52.

> "Love only reading unto me this art."
>
> *Astrophel and Stella*, sonnet 28.

The 3d, 6th, 15th, and 28th sonnets return to the same point. He takes poets to task, who

> "With strange similes enrich each line,
> Of herbs or beasts which Ind or Afric hold."
>
> (No. 3.)

He describes how

> "Some one his song in Jove, and Jove's strange tales attires,
> Bordered with bulls and swans, powdered with golden rain;
> Another, humbler wit, to shepherd's pipe retires,
> Yet hiding royal blood full oft in rural vein."
>
> (No. 6.)

He inveighs against

> "You that do search for every purling spring
> Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows;
> And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
> Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring;
> Ye that do dictionary's method bring
> Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows;
> You that poor Petrarch's long deceasèd woes,
> With new-born sighs, and denizened wits do sing."
>
> (No. 15.)

He girds no less against

> "You that with allegory's curious frame
> Of other's children changelings use to make."
> (No. 28.)

All these are on the wrong tack. Stella is sufficient source of inspiration for him, for them, for every singer. This theoretical position, does not, however, prevent him from falling into a very morass of conceits, of which we have an early example in the 9th sonnet. Marino could scarcely have executed variations more elaborate upon the single theme:

> "Queen Virtue's Court, which some call Stella's face."

I may here state that I mean to omit those passages in *Astrophel and Stella* which strike me as merely artificial. I want, if possible, to introduce readers to what is perennially and humanly valuable in the poetical record of Sir Philip Sidney's romance. More than enough will remain of emotion simply expressed, of deep thought pithily presented, to fill a longer chapter than I can dedicate to his book of the heart.

The 2d sonnet describes the growth of Sidney's passion. Love he says, neither smote him at first sight, nor aimed an upward shaft to pierce his heart on the descent.[1] Long familiarity made him appreciate Stella. Liking deepened into love. Yet at the first he neglected to make his love known. Now, too late, he finds him-

[1] This, at least, is how I suppose we ought to interpret the word *dribbed*. In Elizabethan English this seems to have been technically equivalent to what in archery is now called *elevating* as opposed to *shooting point blank*.

self hopelessly enslaved when the love for a married woman can yield only torment.

"Not at first sight, nor with a dribbèd shot,
Love gave the wound, which, while I breathe will bleed;
But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
Till by degrees it had full conquest got.
I saw, and liked; I liked, but lovèd not;
I loved, but straight did not what Love decreed:
At length to Love's decrees I forced agreed,
Yet with repining at so partial lot.
Now even that footstep of lost liberty
Is gone; and now, like slave-born Muscovite,
I call it praise to suffer tyranny;
And now employ the remnant of my wit
To make myself believe that all is well,
While with a feeling skill I paint my hell."

In the 4th and 5th sonnets two themes are suggested, which, later on, receive fuller development. The first is the contention between love and virtue; the second is the Platonic conception of beauty as a visible image of virtue. The latter of these motives is thus tersely set forth in sonnet 25:

"The wisest scholar of the wight most wise
By Phoebus' doom, with sugared sentence says
That virtue, if it once met with our eyes,
Strange flames of love it in our souls would raise."

Here, at the commencement of the series, Sidney rather plays with the idea than dwells upon it:

"True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed.
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soul up to our country move;
True, and yet true—that I must Stella love." (No. 5.)

In the 10th sonnet he opens a dispute with Reason, which also is continued at intervals throughout the series:

"I rather wished thee climb the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seek heaven's course or heaven's inside to see;
Why should'st thou toil our thorny soil to till?
Leave sense, and those which sense's objects be;
Deal thou with powers of thoughts, leave Love to Will."
(No. 10.)

The next explains how Cupid has taken possession of Stella's person; only the fool has neglected to creep into her heart. The 12th expands this theme, and concludes thus:

"Thou countest Stella thine, like those whose powers
Having got up a breach by fighting well,
Cry 'Victory! this fair day all is ours!'
O no; her heart is such a citadel,
So fortified with wit, stored with disdain,
That to win it is all the skill and pain." (No. 12.)

At this point, then, of Astrophel's love-diary, Stella still held her heart inviolate, like an acropolis which falls not with the falling of the outworks. In the 14th he replies to a friend who expostulates because he yields to the sinful desire for a married woman:

"If that be sin which doth the manners frame,
Well stayed with truth in word and faith of deed,
Ready of wit and fearing naught but shame;
If that be sin which in fixed hearts doth breed
A loathing of all loose unchastity;
Then love is sin, and let me sinful be." (No. 14.)

The 16th has one fine line. At first Sidney had trifled with love:

"But while I thus with this young lion played,"

I fell, he says, a victim to Stella's eyes. The 18th bewails his misemployed manhood, somewhat in Shakespeare's vein:

"My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys;
My wit doth strive these passions to defend,
Which, for reward, spoil it with vain annoys." (No. 18.)

The 21st takes up the same theme, and combines it with that of the 14th:

"Your words, my friend, right healthful caustics, blame
My young mind marred."

It is clear that Stella's love was beginning to weigh heavily upon his soul. Friends observed an alteration in him, and warned him against the indulgence of anything so ruinous as this passion for a woman who belonged to another. As yet their admonitions could be entertained and playfully put by. Sidney did not feel himself irrevocably engaged. He still trifled with love as a pleasant episode in life, a new and radiant experience. At this point two well-composed sonnets occur, which show how he behaved before the world's eyes with the burden of his nascent love upon his heart:

"The curious wits, seeing dull pensiveness
Bearing itself in my long-settled eyes,
Whence those same fumes of melancholy rise,
With idle pains and missing aim do guess.
Some, that know how my spring I did address,
Deem that my Muse some fruit of knowledge plies;
Others, because the prince of service tries,
Think that I think state errors to redress.
But harder judges judge ambition's rage,
Scourge of itself, still climbing slippery place,
Holds my young brain captived in golden cage.

O fools, or over-wise! alas, the race
Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start
But only Stella's eyes and Stella's heart." (No. 23.)

"Because I oft in dark abstracted guise
Seem most alone in greatest company,
With dearth of words or answers quite awry
To them that would make speech of speech arise;
They deem, and of their doom the rumour flies,
That poison foul of bubbling pride doth lie
So in my swelling breast, that only I
Fawn on myself and others do despise.
Yet pride, I think, doth not my soul possess,
Which looks too oft in his unflattering glass;
But one worse fault, ambition, I confess,
That makes me oft my best friends overpass,
Unseen, unheard, while thought to highest place
Bends all his powers—even unto Stella's grace."
(No. 27.)

Now, too, begin the series of plays upon the name Rich, and invectives against Stella's husband. It seems certain that Lord Rich was not worthy of his wife. Sidney had an unbounded contempt for him. He calls him "rich fool" and "lout," and describes Stella's bondage to him as "a foul yoke." Yet this disdain, however rightly felt, ought not to have found vent in such sonnets as Nos. 24 and 78. The latter degenerates into absolute offensiveness, when, after describing the *faux jaloux* under a transparent allegory, he winds up with the question:

"Is it not evil that such a devil wants horns?"

The first section of *Astrophel and Stella* closes with sonnet 30. Thus far Sidney has been engaged with his poetical exordium. Thus far his love has been an

absorbing pastime rather than the business of his life. The 31st sonnet preludes, with splendid melancholy, to a new and deeper phase of passion:

"With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What, may it be that even in heavenly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
I read it in thy looks; thy languished grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.
Then, even of fellowship, O moon, tell me,
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?"

Sidney's thoughts, throughout these poems, were often with the night; far oftener than Petrarch's or than Shakespeare's. In the course of our analysis, we shall cull many a meditation belonging to the hours before the dawn, and many a pregnant piece of midnight imagery. What can be more quaintly accurate in its condensed metaphors than the following personification of dreams?

"Morpheus, the lively son of deadly sleep,
Witness of life to them that living die,
A prophet oft, and oft an history,
A poet eke, as humours fly or creep." (No. 32.)

In the 33d sonnet we find the first hint that Stella might have reciprocated Astrophel's love:

"I might, unhappy word, woe me, I might!
And then would not, or could not, see my bliss:

Till now, wrapped in a most infernal night,
I find how heavenly day, wretch, I did miss.
Heart, rend thyself; thou dost thyself but right!
No lovely Paris made thy Helen his;
No force, no fraud robbed thee of thy delight,
Nor fortune of thy fortune author is!
But to myself myself did give the blow,
While too much wit, forsooth, so troubled me,
That I respects for both our sakes must show:
And yet could not, by rising morn foresee
How fair a day was near: O punished eyes,
That I had been more foolish or more wise!" (No. 33.)

This sonnet has generally been taken to refer to Sidney's indolence before the period of Stella's marriage; in which case it expands the line of No. 2:

"I loved, but straight did not what Love decrees."

It may, however, have been written upon the occasion of some favourable chance which he neglected to seize; and the master phrase of the whole composition "respects for both our sakes," rather points to this interpretation. We do not know enough of the obstacles to Sidney's match with Penelope Devereux to be quite sure whether such "respects" existed while she was at liberty.

There is nothing now left for him but to vent his regrets and vain longings in words. But what are empty words, what consolation can they bring?

"And, ah, what hope that hope should once see day,
Where Cupid is sworn page to chastity?" (No. 35.)

Each day Stella makes new inroads upon the fortress of his soul.

"Through my long-battered eyes
Whole armies of thy beauties entered in:
And there long since, love, thy lieutenant lies."
(No. 36.)

Stella can weep over tales of unhappy lovers she has never known. Perhaps if she could think his case a fable, she might learn to pity him:

"Then think, my dear, that you in me do read
Of lover's ruin some thrice-sad tragedy.
I am not I; pity the tale of me!" (No. 45.)

He entreats her not to shun his presence or withdraw the heaven's light of her eyes:

"Soul's joy, bend not those morning stars from me,
Where virtue is made strong by beauty's might!"

Nay, let her gaze upon him, though that splendour should wither up his life:

"A kind of grace it is to kill with speed." (No. 48.)

He prays to her, as to a deity raised high above the stress and tempest of his vigilant desires:

"Alas, if from the height of virtue's throne
Thou canst vouchsafe the influence of a thought
Upon a wretch that long thy grace hath sought,
Weigh then how I by thee am overthrown!" (No. 40.)

It is here, too, that the pathetic outcry, "my mind, now of the basest," now (that is) of the lowest and most humbled, is forced from him. Then, returning to the theme of Stella's unconquerable virtue, he calls her eyes

"The schools where Venus hath learned chastity."
(No. 42.)

From the midst of this group shine forth, like stars, two sonnets of pure but of very different lustre:

"Come, sleep! O sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
Th' indifferent judge between the high and low!
With shield of proof shield me from out the press
Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw;
O make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf of noise and blind of light,
A rosy garland and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine in right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see." (No. 39.)

"Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance
Guided so well that I obtained the prize,
Both by the judgment of the English eyes
And of some sent from that sweet enemy France;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance,
Town-folks my strength; a daintier judge applies
His praise to sleight which from good use doth rise;
Some lucky wits impute it but to chance;
Others, because of both sides I do take
My blood from them who did excel in this,
Think nature me a man-at-arms did make.
How far they shot awry! the true cause is,
Stella looked on, and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race."
(No. 41.)

Sometimes he feels convinced that this passion will be his ruin, and strives, but strives in vain as yet, against it:

"Virtue, awake! Beauty but beauty is;
I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
Leave following that which it is gain to miss.
Let her go! Soft, but here she comes! Go to,

Unkind, I love you not! O me, that eye
Doth make my heart to give my tongue the lie!"

(No. 47.)

Sometimes he draws strength from the same passion; at another time the sight of Stella well-nigh unnerves his trained bridle-hand, and suspends his lance in rest. This from the tilting-ground is worth preserving:

"In martial sports I had my cunning tried,
And yet to break more staves did me address,
While with the people's shouts, I must confess,
Youth, luck, and praise even filled my veins with pride;
When Cupid, having me, his slave, descried
In Mars's livery prancing in the press,
'What now, Sir Fool!' said he: I would no less:
'Look here, I say!' I looked, and Stella spied,
Who hard by made a window send forth light.
My heart then quaked, then dazzled were mine eyes;
One hand forgot to rule, th' other to fight,
Nor trumpet's sound I heard nor friendly cries:
My foe came on, and beat the air for me,
Till that her blush taught me my shame to see."

(No. 53.)

The quaint author of the *Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney*, prefixed to the *Arcadia*, relates how—"many nobles of the female sex, venturing as far as modesty would permit, to signify their affections unto him; Sir Philip will not read the characters of their love, though obvious to every eye." This passage finds illustration in the next sonnet:

"Because I breathe not love to every one,
Nor do not use set colours for to wear,
Nor nourish special locks of vowèd hair,
Nor give each speech a full point of a groan;
The courtly nymphs, acquainted with the moan

Of them which in their lips love's standard bear,
'What he!' say they of me: 'now I dare swear
He cannot love; no, no, let him alone!'
And think so still, so Stella know my mind!
Profess indeed I do not Cupid's art:
But you, fair maids, at length this true shall find,
That his right badge is but worn in the heart:
Dumb swans, not chattering pies, do lovers prove;
They love indeed who quake to say they love."
(No. 54.)

Up to this point Stella has been Sidney's saint, the adored object, remote as a star from his heart's sphere. Now at last she confesses that she loves him. But her love is of pure and sisterly temper; and she mingles its avowal with noble counsels, little to his inclination.

"Late tired with woe, even ready for to pine
With rage of love, I called my love unkind;
She in whose eyes love, though unfelt, doth shine,
Sweet said that I true love in her should find.
I joyed; but straight thus watered was my wine:
That love she did, but loved a love not blind;
Which would not let me, whom she loved, decline
From nobler course, fit for my birth and mind;
And therefore by her love's authority
Willed me these tempests of vain love to fly,
And anchor fast myself on virtue's shore.
Alas, if this the only metal be
Of love new-coined to help my beggary,
Dear, love me not, that you may love me more!"
(No. 62.)

His heated senses rebel against her admonitions:

"No more, my dear, no more these counsels try;
O give my passions leave to run their race;
Let fortune lay on me her worst disgrace;
Let folk o'ercharged with brain against me cry;

Let clouds bedim my face, break in mine eye;
Let me no steps but of lost labour trace;
Let all the earth with scorn recount my case;
But do not will me from my love to fly!" (No. 64.)

Then he seeks relief in trifles. Playing upon his own coat of arms ("or, a pheon azure"), he tells Love how he nursed him in his bosom, and how they both must surely be of the same lineage:

"For when, naked boy, thou couldst no harbour find
In this old world, grown now so too-too wise,
I lodged thee in my heart, and being blind
By nature born, I gave to thee mine eyes . . .
Yet let this thought thy tigrish courage pass,
That I perhaps am somewhat kin to thee;
Since in thine arms, if learned fame truth hath spread,
Thou bear'st the arrow, I the arrow head." (No. 65.)

Stella continues to repress his ardour:

"I cannot brag of word, much less of deed . . .
Desire still on stilts of fear doth go." (No. 66.)

Yet once she blushed when their eyes met; and her blush "guilty seemed of love." Therefore he expostulates with her upon her cruelty:

"Stella, the only planet of my light,
Light of my life, and life of my desire,
Chief good whereto my hope doth only aspire,
World of my wealth, and heaven of my delight;
Why dost thou spend the treasures of thy sprite,
With voice more fit to wed Amphion's lyre,
Seeking to quench in me the noble fire
Fed by thy worth and kindled by thy sight?"
(No. 68.)

Suddenly, to close this contention, we find him at the height of his felicity. Stella has relented, yielding him

the kingdom of her heart, but adding the condition that he must love, as she does, virtuously:

"O joy too high for my low style to show!
O bliss fit for a nobler state than me!
Envy, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What oceans of delight in me do flow!
My friend, that oft saw through all masks my woe,
Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee:
Gone is the winter of my misery;
My spring appears; O see what here doth grow!
For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart given me the monarchy;
I, I, O I, may say that she is mine!
And though she give but thus conditionally,
This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,
No kings be crowned but they some covenants make."
(No. 69.)

Now, the stanzas which have so long eased his sadness, shall be turned to joy:

"Sonnets be not bound prentice to annoy;
Trebles sing high, so well as basses deep;
Grief but Love's winter-livery is; the boy
Hath cheeks to smile, so well as eyes to weep."

And yet, with the same breath, he says:

"Wise silence is best music unto bliss." (No. 70.)

In the next sonnet he shows that Stella's virtuous conditions do not satisfy. True it is that whoso looks upon her face,

"There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
Of reason. . . . .
But, ah, desire still cries: Give me some food!"
(No. 71.)

Farewell then to desire:

"Desire, though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure love that I
One from the other scarcely can descry,
While each doth blow the fire of my heart;
Now from thy fellowship I needs must part."

(No. 72.)

It is characteristic of the fluctations both of feeling and circumstance, so minutely followed in Astrophel's love-diary, that, just at this moment, when he has resolved to part with desire, he breaks out into this jubilant song upon the stolen kiss:

"Have I caught my heavenly jewel,
Teaching sleep most fair to be!
Now will I teach her that she,
When she wakes, is too-too cruel.

"Since sweet sleep her eyes hath charmèd,
The two only darts of Love,
Now will I with that boy prove
Some play while he is disarmèd.

"Her tongue, waking, still refuseth,
Giving frankly niggard no:
Now will I attempt to know
What no her tongue, sleeping, useth.

"See the hand that, waking, guardeth,
Sleeping, grants a free resort:
Now will I invade the fort;
Cowards Love with loss rewardeth.

"But, O fool, think of the danger
Of her high and just disdain!
Now will I, alas, refrain:
Love fears nothing else but anger.

"Yet those lips, so sweetly swelling,
Do invite a stealing kiss:
Now will I but venture this;
Who will read, must first learn spelling.

"Oh, sweet kiss! but ah, she's waking;
Lowering beauty chastens me:
Now will I for fear hence flee;
Fool, more fool, for no mere taking!"

Several pages are occupied with meditations on this lucky kiss. The poet's thoughts turn to alternate ecstasy and wantonness.

"I never drank of Aganippe's well,
Nor ever did in shade of Tempe sit,
And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell;
Poor layman I, for sacred rites unfit!
. . . . .
"How falls it then that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak; and what I speak doth flow
In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?"

The answer of course is:

"Thy lips are sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss."
(No. 74.)

In this mood we find him praising Edward IV., who risked his kingdom for Lady Elizabeth Grey.

"Of all the kings that ever here did reign,
Edward, named fourth, as first in praise I name;
Not for his fair outside, nor well-lined brain,
Although less gifts imp feathers oft on fame:
Nor that he could, young-wise, wise-valiant, frame
His sire's revenge, joined with a kingdom's gain;
And gained by Mars, could yet mad Mars so tame
That balance weighed what sword did late obtain:

Nor that he made the flower-de-luce so 'fraid,
Though strongly hedged of bloody lions' paws,
That witty Lewis to him a tribute paid:
Not this, not that, nor any such small cause;
But only for this worthy knight durst prove
To lose his crown rather than fail his love."

(No. 75.)

A sonnet on the open road, in a vein of conceits worthy of Philostratus, closes the group inspired by Stella's kiss:

"High way, since you my chief Parnassus be,
And that my Muse, to some ears not unsweet,
Tempers her words to trampling horse's feet
More oft than to a chamber-melody:
Now blessèd you bear onward blessèd me
To her, where I my heart, safe-left shall meet,
My Muse and I must you of duty greet
With thanks and wishes, wishing thankfully.
Be you still fair, honoured by public heed;
By no encroachment wronged, nor time forgot;
Nor blamed for blood, nor shamed for sinful deed;
And that you know I envy you no lot
Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss—
Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss."

(No. 84.)

And now a change comes over the spirit of Sidney's dream. It is introduced, as the episode of the stolen kiss was, by a song. We do not know on what occasion he may have found himself alone with Stella at night, when her husband's jealousy was sleeping, the house closed, and her mother in bed. But the lyric refers, I think, clearly to some real incident—perhaps at Leicester House:

"Only joy, now here you are
Fit to hear and ease my care,

Let my whispering voice obtain
Sweet reward for sharpest pain ;
Take me to thee and thee to me :—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"Night hath closed all in her cloak,
Twinkling stars love-thoughts provoke ;
Danger hence, good care doth keep ;
Jealousy himself doth sleep ;
Take me to thee and thee to me :—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"Better place no wit can find
Cupid's knot to loose or bind ;
These sweet flowers, our fine bed, too
Us in their best language woo :
Take me to thee and thee to me :—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"This small light the moon bestows,
Serves thy beams but to disclose ;
So to raise my hap more high,
Fear not else ; none can us spy :
Take me to thee and thee to me :—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"That you heard was but a mouse ;
Dumb sleep holdeth all the house ;
Yet asleep, methinks they say,
Young fools, take time while you may :
Take me to thee and thee to me :—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"Niggard time threats, if we miss
This large offer of our bliss,
Long stay ere he grant the same :
Sweet then, while each thing doth frame,
Take me to thee and thee to me :—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"Your fair mother is a-bed,
Candles out and curtains spread;
She thinks you do letters write:
Write, but first let me endite:
Take me to thee and thee to me:—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"Sweet, alas! why strive you thus?
Concord better fitteth us;
Leave to Mars the strife of hands;
Your power in your beauty stands:
Take me to thee and thee to me:—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"Woe to me! and do you swear
Me to hate? but I forbear:
Cursèd be my destinies all,
That brought me so high to fall!
Soon with my death I'll please thee:—
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'"

It will be noticed that to all his pleadings, passionate or playful, and (it must be admitted) of very questionable morality, she returns a steadfast No! This accounts for the altered tone of the next sonnet. In the 85th he had indulged golden, triumphant visions, and had bade his heart be moderate in the fruition of its bliss. Now he exclaims:

"Alas! whence came this change of looks? If I
Have changed desert, let mine own conscience be
A still-felt plague to self-condemning me;
Let woe gripe on my heart, shame load mine eye!"
(No. 86.)

He has pressed his suit too far, and Stella begins to draw back from their common danger. Five songs fol-

low in quick succession, one of which prepares us for the *denouement* of the love-drama:

"In a grove most rich of shade,
Where birds wanton music made,
May, then young, his pied weeds showing,
New-perfumed with flowers fresh growing:

"Astrophel with Stella sweet
Did for mutual comfort meet;
Both within themselves oppressèd,
But each in the other blessèd.

"Him great harms had taught much care,
Her fair neck a foul yoke bare;
But her sight his cares did banish,
In his sight her yoke did vanish.

"Wept they had, alas, the while;
But now tears themselves did smile,
While their eyes, by Love directed,
Interchangeably reflected."

For a time the lovers sat thus in silence, sighing and gazing, until Love himself broke out into a passionate apostrophe from the lips of Astrophel:

"Grant, O grant! but speech, alas,
Fails me, fearing on to pass:
Grant, O me! what am I saying?
But no fault there is in praying.

"Grant, O dear, on knees I pray
(Knees on ground he then did stay)
That not I, but since I love you,
Time and place for me may move you.

"Never season was more fit;
Never room more apt for it;
Smiling air allows my reason;
These birds sing, 'Now use the season.'

"This small wind, which so sweet is,
See how it the leaves doth kiss;
Each tree in his best attiring,
Sense of love to love inspiring.

"Love makes earth the water drink,
Love to earth makes water sink;
And if dumb things be so witty,
Shall a heavenly grace want pity?"

To this and to yet more urgent wooing Stella replies in stanzas which are sweetly dignified, breathing the love she felt, but dutifully repressed.

"Astrophel, said she, my love,
Cease in these effects to prove;
Now be still, yet still believe me,
Thy grief more than death would grieve me.

"If that any thought in me
Can taste comfort but of thee,
Let me, fed with hellish anguish,
Joyless, hopeless, endless languish.

"If those eyes you praisèd be
Half so dear as you to me,
Let me home return stark blinded
Of those eyes, and blinder minded;

"If to secret of my heart
I do any wish impart
Where thou art not foremost placèd,
Be both wish and I defacèd.

"If more may be said, I say
All my bliss in thee I lay;
If thou love, my love, content thee,
For all love, all faith is meant thee.

"Trust me, while I thee deny,
In myself the smart I try;
Tyrant honour doth thus use thee,
Stella's self might not refuse thee.

"Therefore, dear, this no more move,
Lest, though I not leave thy love,
Which too deep in me is framèd,
I should blush when thou art namèd.

"Therewithal away she went,
Leaving him to [so ?] passion rent
With what she had done and spoken,
That therewith my song is broken."

The next song records Astrophel's hard necessity of parting from Stella. But why—

"Why, alas, doth she thus swear
That she loveth me so dearly?"

The group of sonnets which these lyrics introduce lead up to the final rupture, not indeed of heart and will, but of imposed necessity, which separates the lovers. Stella throughout plays a part which compels our admiration, and Astrophel brings himself at length to obedience. The situation has become unbearable to her. She loves, and, what is more, she has confessed her love. But, at any price, for her own sake, for his sake, for honour, for duty, for love itself, she must free them both from the enchantment which is closing round them. Therefore the path which hitherto has been ascending through fair meadows to the height of rapture, now descends upon the other side. It is for Sidney a long road of sighs and tears, rebellions and heart-aches, a veritable *via dolorosa*, ending, however, in conquest over

self and tranquillity of conscience. For, as he sang in happier moments:

"For who indeed infelt affection bears,
So captives to his saint both soul and sense,
That, wholly hers, all selfness he forbears;
Then his desires he learns, his life's course thence."
(No. 61.)

In the hour of their parting Stella betrays her own emotion:

"Alas, I found that she with me did smart;
I saw that tears did in her eyes appear."
(No. 87.)

After this follow five pieces written in absence:

"Tush, absence! while thy mists eclipse that light,
My orphan sense flies to the inward sight,
Where memory sets forth the beams of love."
(No. 88.)

"Each day seems long, and longs for long-stayed night;
The night, as tedious, woos the approach of day:
Tired with the dusty toils of busy day,
Languished with horrors of the silent night,
Suffering the evils both of day and night,
While no night is more dark than is my day,
Nor no day hath less quiet than my night."
(No. 89.)

He gazes on other beauties; amber-coloured hair, milk-white hands, rosy cheeks, lips sweeter and redder than the rose:

"They please, I do confess, they please mine eyes;
But why? because of you they models be,
Models, such be wood-globes of glistering skies."
(No. 91.)

A friend speaks to him of Stella:

"You say, forsooth, you left her well of late;—
O God, think you *that* satisfies my care?
I would know whether she did sit or walk;
How clothed, how waited on; sighed she, or smiled;
Whereof, with whom, how often did she talk;
With what pastimes Time's journey she beguiled;
If her lips deigned to sweeten my poor name.—
Say all; and all well said, still say the same."

(No. 92.)

Interpolated in this group is a more than usually fluent sonnet, in which Sidney disclaims all right to call himself a poet:

"Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame,
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee;
Thine eyes my pride, thy lips my history:
If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.
Nor so ambitious am I as to frame
A nest for my young praise in laurel-tree;
In truth I swear I wish not there should be
Graved in my epitaph a poet's name.
Nor, if I would, could I just title make
That any laud thereof to me should grow,
Without my plumes from other wings I take;
For nothing from my wit or will doth flow,
Since all my words thy beauty doth endite,
And love doth hold my hand and makes me write."

(No. 90.)

The sonnets in absence are closed by a song, which, as usual, introduces a new motive. It begins "O dear life," and indulges a far too audacious retrospect over the past happiness of a lover. If, as seems possible from an allusion in No. 84, he was indiscreet enough to communicate his poems to friends, this lyric may have roused

the jealousy of Stella's husband and exposed her to hard treatment or reproaches. At any rate, something he had said or done caused her pain, and he breaks out into incoherent self-revilings:

"O fate, O fault, O curse, child of my bliss! . . .
Through me, wretch me, even Stella vexèd is . . .
I have (live I, and know this?) harmèd thee . . .
I cry thy sighs, my dear, thy tears I bleed."
(No. 93.)

Should any one doubt the sincerity of accent here, let him peruse the next seven sonnets, which are written in sequence upon the same theme.

"Grief, find the words; for thou hast made my brain
So dark with misty vapours which arise
From out thy heavy mould, that inbent eyes
Can scarce discern the shape of mine own pain."
(No. 94.)

"Yet sighs, dear sighs, indeed true friends you are,
That do not leave your left friend at the worst;
But, as you with my breast I oft have nursed,
So, grateful now, you wait upon my care.

. . . . .

"Nay, Sorrow comes with such main rage that he
Kills his own children, tears, finding that they
By Love were made apt to consort with me:
Only, true sighs, you do not go away." (No. 95.)

The night is heavier, more irksome to him; and yet he finds in it the parallel of his own case:

"Poor Night in love with Phœbus' light,
And endlessly despairing of his grace." (No. 97.)

The bed becomes a place of torment:

"While the black horrors of the silent night
Paint woe's black face so lively to my sight,
That tedious leisure marks each wrinkled line."
(No. 98.)

Only at dawn can he find ease in slumber. The sonnet, in which this motive is developed, illustrates Sidney's method of veiling definite and simple thoughts in abstruse and yet exact phrases. We feel impelled to say that there is something Shakespearean in the style. But we must remember that Shakespeare's sonnets were at this time locked up within his brain, as the flower is in the bud.

"When far-spent night persuades each mortal eye
To whom nor art nor nature granteth light,
To lay his then mark-wanting shafts of sight
Closed with their quivers in sleep's armoury;
With windows ope then most my mind doth lie
Viewing the shape of darkness, and delight
Takes in that sad hue, which with the inward night
Of his mazed powers keeps perfect harmony:
But when birds charm, and that sweet air which is
Morn's messenger with rose-enamelled skies
Calls each wight to salute the flower of bliss;
In tomb of lids then buried are mine eyes,
Forced by their lord who is ashamed to find
Such light in sense with such a darkened mind."
(No. 99.)

Two sonnets upon Stella's illness (to which I should be inclined to add the four upon this topic printed in Constable's *Diana*) may be omitted. But I cannot refrain from quoting the last song. It is in the form of a dialogue at night beneath Stella's window. Though

apparently together at the Court, he had received express commands from her to abstain from her society; the reason of which can perhaps be found in No. 104. This sonnet shows that "envious wits" were commenting upon their intimacy; and Sidney had compromised her by wearing stars upon his armour. Anyhow he is now reduced to roaming the streets in darkness, hoping to obtain a glimpse of his beloved.

"'Who is it that this dark night
Underneath my window plaineth?'
It is one who from thy sight
Being, ah, exiled disdaineth
Every other vulgar light.

"'Why, alas, and are you he?
Be not yet those fancies changèd?'
Dear, when you find change in me,
Though from me you be estrangèd,
Let my change to ruin be.

"'Well, in absence this will die;
Leave to see, and leave to wonder.'
Absence sure will help, if I
Can learn how myself to sunder
From what in my heart doth lie.

"'But time will these thoughts remove;
Time doth work what no man knoweth.'
Time doth as the subject prove;
With time still the affection groweth
In the faithful turtle-dove.

"'What if ye new beauties see;
Will not they stir new affection?'
I will think they pictures be;
Image-like of saints' perfection,
Poorly counterfeiting thee.

"'But your reason's purest light
Bids you leave such minds to nourish.'
Dear, do reason no such spite!
Never doth thy beauty flourish
More than in my reason's sight.

"'But the wrongs Love bears will make
Love at length leave undertaking.'
No! the more fools it doth shake,
In a ground of so firm making
Deeper still they drive the stake.

"'Peace, I think that some give ear;
Come no more lest I get anger!'
Bliss, I will my bliss forbear,
Fearing, sweet, you to endanger;
But my soul shall harbour there.

"'Well, begone; begone, I say;
Lest that Argus' eyes perceive you!'
O unjust is fortune's sway,
Which can make me thus to leave you;
And from louts to run away!"

A characteristic but rather enigmatical sonnet follows this lyric. It is another night scene. Sidney, watching from his window, just misses the sight of Stella as her carriage hurries by:

"Cursed be the page from whom the bad torch fell;
Cursed be the night which did your strife resist;
Cursed be the coachman that did drive so fast."
(No. 105.)

Then *Astrophel and Stella* closes abruptly, with those disconnected sonnets, in one of which the word "despair" occurring justifies Nash's definition of "the epilogue, Despair":

"But soon as thought of thee breeds my delight,
And my young soul flutters to thee his nest,
Most rude Despair, my daily unbidden guest,
Clips straight my wings, straight wraps me in his night."
(No. 108.)

Stella's prudent withdrawal of herself from Sidney's company begins to work with salutary effect upon his passion. As that cools or fades for want of nourishment, so the impulse to write declines; and the poet's sincerity is nowhere better shown than in the sudden and ragged ending of his work. I doubt whether the two sonnets on Desire and Love, which Dr. Grosart has transferred from the Miscellaneous Poems and printed here as Nos. 109 and 110, were really meant to form part of *Astrophel and Stella*. They strike me as retrospective, composed in a mood of stern and somewhat bitter meditation on the past, and probably after some considerable interval; yet the Latin epigraph attached to the second has the force of an envoy. Moreover, they undoubtedly represent the attitude of mind in which Sidney bade farewell to unhallowed love, and which enabled him loyally to plight his troth to Frances Walsingham. Therefore it will not be inappropriate to close the analysis of his love poetry upon this note. No one, reading them, will fail to be struck with their resemblance to Shakespeare's superb sonnets upon Lust and Death ("The expense of spirit" and "Poor soul, thou centre"), which are perhaps the two most completely powerful sonnets in our literature:

"Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen snare,
Fond fancy's scum, and dregs of scattered thought;
Band of all evils; cradle of causeless care;
Thou web of will whose end is never wrought!

Desire, desire! I have too dearly bought
With price of mangled mind thy worthless ware;
Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me brought,
Who shouldst my mind to higher things prepare.
But yet in vain thou hast my ruin sought;
In vain thou mad'st me to vain things aspire;
In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire:
For virtue hath this better lesson taught—
Within myself to seek my only hire,
Desiring naught but how to kill desire.

"Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust;
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;
Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be,
Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light,
That doth but shine and give us sight to see.
O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide
In this small course which birth draws out to death;
And think how evil becometh him to slide,
Who seeketh heaven and comes of heavenly breath.
Then farewell, world! thy uttermost I see:
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me!"

"Splendidis Longum Valedico Nugis."

CHAPTER VII

"THE DEFENCE OF POESY"

FULKE GREVILLE, touching upon the *Arcadia*, says that Sidney "purposed no monuments of books to the world." "If his purpose had been to leave his memory in books, I am confident, in the right use of logic, philosophy, history, and poesy, nay even in the most ingenious of mechanical arts, he would have showed such tracts of a searching and judicious spirit as the professors of every faculty would have striven no less for him than the seven cities did to have Homer of their sept. But the truth is: his end was not writing, even while he wrote; nor his knowledge moulded for tables or schools; but both his wit and understanding bent upon his heart, to make himself and others, not in words or opinion, but in life and action, good and great."

"His end was not writing, even while he wrote." This is certain; the whole tenor of Sidney's career proves his determination to subordinate self-culture of every kind to the ruling purpose of useful public action. It will also be remembered that none of his compositions were printed during his lifetime or with his sanction. Yet he had received gifts from nature which placed him, as a critic, high above the average of his contem-

poraries. He was no mean poet when he sang as love dictated. He had acquired and assimilated various stores of knowledge. He possessed an exquisite and original taste, a notable faculty for the marshalling of arguments, and a persuasive eloquence in exposition. These qualities inevitably found their exercise in writing; and of all Sidney's writings the one with which we have to deal now, is the ripest.

Judging by the style alone, I should be inclined to place *The Defence of Poesy* among his later works. But we have no certain grounds for fixing the year of its composition. Probably the commonly accepted date of 1581 is the right one. In the year 1579 Stephen Gosson dedicated to Sidney, without asking his permission, an invective against "poets, pipers, players, and their excusers," which he called *The School of Abuse*. Spenser observes that Gosson "was for his labour scorned; if at least it lie in the goodness of that nature to scorn. Such folly is it not to regard aforehand the nature and quality of him to whom we dedicate our books." It is possible therefore that *The School of Abuse* and other treatises emanating from Puritan hostility to culture, suggested this Apology. Sidney rated poetry highest among the functions of the human intellect. His name had been used to give authority and currency to a clever attack upon poets. He felt the weight of argument to be on his side, and was conscious of his ability to conduct the cause. With what serenity of spirit, sweetness of temper, humour, and easy strength of style—at one time soaring to enthusiasm, at another playing with his subject,—he performed the task, can only be appreciated by a close perusal of the essay. It is indeed the model

for such kinds of composition—a work which combines the quaintness and the blitheness of Elizabethan literature with the urbanity and reserve of a later period.

Sidney begins by numbering himself among "the paper-blurrers," "who, I know not by what mischance, in these my not old years and idlest times, having slipped into the title of a poet, am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation." Hence it is his duty "to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which from almost the highest estimation of learning, is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children." Underlying Sidney's main argument we find the proposition that to attack poetry is the same as attacking culture in general; therefore, at the outset, he appeals to all professors of learning: will they inveigh against the mother of arts and sciences, the "first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledge?" Musæus, Homer, and Hesiod lead the solemn pomp of the Greek writers. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in Italy, Gower and Chaucer in England came before prose-authors. The earliest philosophers, Empedocles and Parmenides, Solon and Tyrtæus, committed their metaphysical speculations, their gnomic wisdom, their martial exhortation, to verse. And even Plato, if rightly considered, was a poet: "in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin as it were, and beauty, depended most of poetry." Herodotus called his books by the names of the Muses: "both he and all the rest that followed him, either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles

which no man could affirm." They also put imaginary speeches into the mouths of kings and captains. The very names which the Greeks and Romans, "the authors of most of our sciences," gave to poets, show the estimation in which they held them. The Romans called the poet *vates*, or prophet; the Greeks ποιητής, or maker, a word, by the way, which coincides with English custom. What can be higher in the scale of human understanding than this faculty of *making*? Sidney enlarges upon its significance, following a line of thought which Tasso summed up in one memorable sentence: "There is no Creator but God and the Poet."

He now advances a definition, which is substantially the same as Aristotle's: "Poesy is an art of imitation; that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth: to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture; with this end to teach and delight." Of poets there have been three general kinds: first, "they that did imitate the inconceivable excellences of God;" secondly, "they that deal with matter philosophical, either moral or natural or astronomical or historical;" thirdly, "right poets . . . which most properly do imitate, to teach and delight; and to imitate, borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range only, reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be." The preference given to the third kind of poets may be thus explained: The first group are limited to setting forth fixed theological conceptions; the second have their material supplied them by the sciences; but the third are the makers and creators of ideals for warning and example.

Poets may also be classified according to the several

species of verse. But this implies a formal and misleading limitation. Sidney, like Milton and like Shelley, will not have poetry confined to metre: "apparelled verse being but an ornament, and no cause to poetry; since there have been many most excellent poets that have never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets." Xenophon's "Cyropædia," the "Theagenes and Chariclea" of Heliodorus, are cited as true poems; "and yet both these wrote in prose." "It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet; but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by." Truly "the senate of poets have chosen verse as their fittest raiment;" but this they did, because they meant, "as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them." "Speech, next to reason, is the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality;" and verse "which most doth polish that blessing of speech," is, therefore, the highest investiture of poetic thought.

Having thus defined his conception of poetry, Sidney inquires into the purpose of all learning. "This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed; the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clay lodgings, can be capable of." All the branches of learning subserve the royal or architectonic science, "which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing, and not

of well-knowing only." If then virtuous action be the ultimate object of all our intellectual endeavours, can it be shown that the poet contributes above all others to this exalted aim? Sidney thinks it can.

Omitting divines and jurists, for obvious reasons, he finds that the poet's only competitors are philosophers and historians. It therefore now behoves him to prove that poetry contributes more to the formation of character for virtuous action than either philosophy or history. The argument is skilfully conducted, and developed with nice art; but it amounts in short to this, that while philosophy is too abstract and history is too concrete, poetry takes the just path between these extremes, and combines their methods in a harmony of more persuasive force than either. "Now doth the peerless poet perform both; for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it, by some one whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example." "Anger, the Stoics said, was a short madness; but let Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of Greeks, with their chieftains Agamemnon and Menelaus; and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger than finding in the schoolmen his genus and difference?" Even Christ used parables and fables for the firmer inculcation of his divine precepts. If philosophy is too much occupied with the universal, history is too much bound to the particular. It dares not go beyond what was, may not travel into what might or should be. Moreover, "history being captivated to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing,

and an encouragment to unbridled wickedness." It cannot avoid revealing virtue overwhelmed with calamity and vice in prosperous condition. Poetry labours not under the same restrictions. Her ideals, delightfully presented, entering the soul with the enchanting strains of music, "set the mind forward to that which deserves to be called and accounted good." In fine: "as virtue is the most excellent resting-place for all worldly learning to make his end of, so poetry, being the most familiar to teach it, and most princely to move towards it, in the most excellent work is the most excellent workman."

Sidney next passes the various species of poems in review: the pastoral; "the lamenting elegiac;" "the bitter but wholesome iambic;" the satiric; the comic, "whom naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made odious;" "the high and excellent tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue—that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants to manifest their tyrannical humours—that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilded roofs are builded;" the lyric, "who with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice giveth praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts—who giveth moral precepts and natural problems—who sometimes raiseth up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God;" the epic or heroic, "whose very name, I think, should daunt all backbiters . . . which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry." He calls upon the detractors of poesy to bring their complaints against these several sorts, and to indi-

cate in each of them its errors. What they may allege in disparagement, he meets with chosen arguments, among which we can select his apology for the lyric. "Certainly, I must confess my own barbarousness: I never heard the old song of 'Percy and Douglas' that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil-apparelled in the dust and cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?"

Having reached this point, partly on the way of argument, partly on the path of appeal and persuasion, Sidney halts to sum his whole position up in one condensed paragraph:

"Since, then, poetry is of all human learnings the most ancient, and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings; since it is so universal that no learned nation doth despise it, nor barbarous nation is without it; since both Roman and Greek gave such divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making, and that indeed that name of making is fit for him, considering, that where all other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only, only bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit; since neither his description nor end containeth any evil, the thing described cannot be evil; since his effects be so good as to teach goodness, and delight the learners of it; since therein (namely in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges) he doth not only far pass the historian, but, for instructing, is well nigh comparable to the philosopher; for moving, leaveth him behind him; since the Holy Scripture (wherein there is no uncleanness) hath whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use

the flowers of it; since all his kinds are not only in their united forms, but in their severed dissections fully commendable; I think, and think I think rightly, the laurel crown appointed for triumphant captains, doth worthily, of all other learnings, honour the poet's triumph."

Objections remain to be combated in detail. Sidney chooses one first, which offers no great difficulty. The detractors of poetry gird at "rhyming and versing." He has already laid it down that "one may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry." But he has also shown why metrical language should be regarded as the choicest and most polished mode of speech. Verse, too, fits itself to music more properly than prose, and far exceeds it "in the knitting up of the memory." Nor is rhyme to be neglected, especially in modern metres; seeing that it strikes a music to the ear. But the enemy advances heavier battalions. Against poetry he alleges (1) that there are studies upon which a man may spend his time more profitably; (2) that it is the mother of lies; (3) that it is the nurse of abuse, corrupting the fancy, enfeebling manliness, and instilling pestilent desires into the soul; (4) that Plato banished poets from his commonwealth.

These four points are taken seriatim, and severally answered. The first is set aside, as involving a begging of the question at issue. To the second Sidney replies "paradoxically, but truly I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar; and though he would, as a poet, can scarcely be a liar." It is possible to err, and to affirm falsehood, in all the other departments of knowledge; but "for the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore nothing lieth." His sphere is not the

region of ascertained fact, or of logical propositions, but of imagination and invention. He labours not "to tell you what is, or is not, but what should, or should not be." None is so foolish as to mistake the poet's world for literal fact. "What child is there, that cometh to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?" The third point is more weighty. Are poets blamable, in that they "abuse men's wit, training it to a wanton sinfulness and lustful love?" Folk say "the comedies rather teach than reprehend amorous conceits; they say the lyric is larded with passionate sonnets; the elegiac weeps the want of his mistress; and that even to the heroical Cupid hath ambitiously climbed." Here Sidney turns to Love, and, as though himself acknowledging that deity, invokes him to defend his own cause. Yet let us "grant love of beauty to be a beastly fault," let us "grant that lovely name of love to deserve all hateful reproaches," what have the adversaries gained? Surely they have not proved "that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man's wit abuseth poetry." "But what! shall the abuse of a thing make the right odious?" Does not law, does not physic, injure man every day by the abuse of ignorant practisers? "Doth not God's Word abused breed heresy, and His name abused become blasphemy?" Yet these people contend that before poetry came to infect the English, "our nation had set their heart's delight upon action and not imagination, rather doing things worthy to be written than writing things fit to be done." But when was there that time when the Albion nation was without poetry? Of a truth, this argument is levelled against all learning and all

culture. It is an attack, worthy of Goths or Vandals, upon the stronghold of the intellect. As such, we might dismiss it. Let us, however, remember that "poetry is the companion of camps: I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso or honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier; but the quiddity of *ens* and *prima materia* will hardly agree with a corselet." Alexander on his Indian campaigns left the living Aristotle behind him, but slept with the dead Homer in his tent; condemned Callisthenes to death, but yearned for a poet to commemorate his deeds. Lastly, they advance Plato's verdict against poets. Plato, says Sidney, "I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence; and with good reason, since of all philosophers he is the most poetical." Having delivered this sly thrust, he proceeds: "first, truly, a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets." Next let us look into his writings. Has any poet authorised filthiness more abominable than one can find in the "Phaedrus" and the "Symposium?" "Again, a man might ask out of what commonwealth Plato doth banish them." It is in sooth one where the community of women is permitted; and "little should poetical sonnets be hurtful, when a man might have what woman he listed." After thus trifling with the subject, Sidney points out that Plato was not offended with poetry, but with the abuse of it. He objected to the crude theology and the monstrous ethics of the myth-makers. "So as Plato, banishing the abuse not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour to it, shall be our patron and not our adversary."

Once again he pauses, to recapitulate:

"Since the excellencies of poesy may be so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low creeping objections so soon trodden down; it not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine; not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished, but honoured by Plato; let us rather plant more laurels for to ingarland the poets' heads (which honour of being laureate, as besides them only triumphant captains were, is a sufficient authority to show the price they ought to be held in) than suffer the ill-favoured breath of such wrong speakers once to blow upon the clear springs of poesy."

Then he turns to England. Why is it that England, "the mother of excellent minds, should be grown so hard a stepmother to poets?"

"Sweet poesy, that hath anciently had kings, emperors, senators, great captains, such as, besides a thousand others, David, Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not only to favour poets, but to be poets: and of our nearer times, can present for her patrons, a Robert, King of Sicily; the great King Francis of France; King James of Scotland; such cardinals as Bembus and Bibiena; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and Melancthon; so learned philosophers as Fracastorius and Scaliger; so great orators as Pontanus and Muretus; so piercing wits as George Buchanan; so grave counsellors as, besides many, but before all, that Hospital of France; than whom, I think, that realm never brought forth a more accomplished judgment more firmly builded upon virtue; I say, these, with numbers of others, not only to read others' poesies, but to poetise for others' reading: that poesy, thus embraced in all other places, should only find, in our time, a hard welcome in England, I think the very earth laments it, and therefore decks our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed."

The true cause is that in England so many incapable folk write verses. With the exception of the *Mirror of Magistrates*, Lord Surrey's Lyrics, and *The Shepherd's Kalendar*,

"I do not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them." At this point he introduces a lengthy digression upon the stage, which, were we writing a history of the English drama, ought to be quoted in full. It is interesting because it proves how the theatre occupied Sidney's thoughts; and yet he had not perceived that from the humble plays of the people an unrivalled flower of modern art was about to emerge. *The Defence of Poesy* was written before Marlowe created the romantic drama; before Shakespeare arrived in London. It was written in all probability before its author could have attended the representation of Greene's and Peele's best plays. *Gorboduc*, which he praises moderately and censures with discrimination, seemed to him the finest product of dramatic art in England, because it approached the model of Seneca and the Italian tragedians. For the popular stage, with its chaos of tragic and comic elements, its undigested farrago of romantic incidents and involved plots, he entertained the scorn of a highly-educated scholar and a refined gentleman. Yet no one, let us be sure, would have welcomed *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, *Volpone* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, more enthusiastically than Sidney, had his life been protracted through the natural span of mortality.

Having uttered his opinion frankly on the drama, he attacks the "courtesan-like painted affectation" of the English at his time. Far-fetched words, alliteration, euphuistic similes from stones and beasts and plants, fall under his honest censure. He mentions no man. But he is clearly aiming at the school of Lyly and the pedants; for he pertinently observes: "I have found in

divers small-learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning." Language should be used, not to trick out thoughts with irrelevant ornaments or to smother them in conceits, but to make them as clear and natural as words can do. It is a sin against our mother speech to employ these meretricious arts; for whoso will look dispassionately into the matter, shall convince himself that English, both in its freedom from inflections and its flexibility of accent, is aptest of all modern tongues to be the vehicle of simple and of beautiful utterance.

The peroration to *The Defence of Poesy* is an argument addressed to the personal ambition of the reader. It somewhat falls below the best parts of the essay in style, and makes no special claim on our attention. From the foregoing analysis it will be seen that Sidney attempted to cover a wide field, combining a philosophy of art with a practical review of English literature. Much as the Italians had recently written upon the theory of poetry, I do not remember any treatise which can be said to have supplied the material or suggested the method of this apology. England, of course, at that time was destitute of all but the most meagre textbooks on the subject. Great interest therefore attaches to Sidney's discourse as the original outcome of his studies, meditations, literary experience, and converse with men of parts. Though we may not be prepared to accept each of his propositions, though some will demur to his conception of the artist's moral aim, and others to his inclusion of prose fiction in the definition of poetry, while all will agree in condemning his mistaken dramatic theory, none can dispute the ripeness, mellowness, harmony, and felicity of mental gifts displayed in work at once so concise and so compendious.

It is indeed a pity that English literature then furnished but slender material for criticism. When we remember that, among the poems of the English Renaissance, only Surrey's Lyrics, *Gorboduc*, the *Mirror of Magistrates*, and *The Shepherd's Kalendar* could be praised with candour (and I think Sidney was right in this judgment), we shall be better able to estimate his own high position, and our mental senses will be dazzled by the achievements of the last three centuries. Exactly three centuries have elapsed since Sidney fell at Zutphen; and who shall count the poets of our race, stars differing indeed in glory, but stars that stream across the heavens of song from him to us in one continuous galaxy!

Sir Philip Sidney was not only eminent as pleader, critic, and poet. He also ranked as the patron and protector of men of letters. "He was of a very munificent spirit," says Aubrey, "and liberal to all lovers of learning, and to those that pretended to any acquaintance with Parnassus; insomuch that he was cloyed and surfeited with the poetasters of those days." This sentence is confirmed by the memorial verses written on his death, and by the many books which were inscribed with his name. A list of these may be read in Dr. Zouch's *Life*. It is enough for our purpose to enumerate the more distinguished. To Sidney, Spenser dedicated the first fruits of his genius, and Hakluyt the first collection of his epoch-making Voyages. Henri Etienne, who was proud to call himself the friend of Sidney, placed his 1576 edition of the Greek Testament and his 1581 edition of Herodian under the protection of his name. Lord Brooke, long after his friend's death, dedicated his collected works to Sidney's memory.

Of all these tributes to his love of learning the most interesting in my opinion is that of Giordano Bruno. This Titan of impassioned speculation passed two years in London between 1583 and 1585. Here he composed, and here he printed, his most important works in the Italian tongue. Two of these he presented, with pompous commendatory epistles, to Sir Philip Sidney. They were his treatise upon Ethics, styled *Lo Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante*, and his discourse upon the philosophic enthusiasm, entitled *Gli Eroici Furori*. That Bruno belonged to Sidney's circle, is evident from the graphic account he gives of a supper at Fulke Greville's house, in the dialogue called *La Cena delle Ceneri*. His appreciation of "the most illustrious and excellent knight's" character transpires in the following phrase from one of his dedications: "the natural bias of your spirit, which is truly heroical." Those who know what the word *eroica* implied for Bruno, not only of personal courage, but of sustained and burning spiritual passion, will appreciate this eulogy by one of the most penetrating and candid, as he was the most unfortunate of truth's martyrs. Had the proportions of my work justified such a digression, I would eagerly have collected from Bruno's Italian discourses those paragraphs which cast a vivid light upon literary and social life in England. But these belong rather to Bruno's than to Sidney's biography.

CHAPTER VIII

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

After Sidney's marriage there remained but little more than three years of life to him. The story of this period may be briefly told. Two matters of grave import occupied his mind. These were; first, the menacing attitude of Spain and the advance of the Counter-Reformation; secondly, a project of American Colonisation. The suspicious death of the Duke of Anjou, followed by the murder of the Prince of Orange in 1584, rendered Elizabeth's interference in the Low Countries almost imperative. Philip II., assisted by the powers of Catholicism, and served in secret by the formidable Company of Jesus, threatened Europe with the extinction of religious and political liberties. It was known that, sooner or later, he must strike a deadly blow at England. The Armada loomed already in the distance. But how was he to be attacked? Sidney thought that Elizabeth would do well to put herself at the head of a Protestant alliance against what Fulke Greville aptly styled the "masked triplicity between Spain, Rome, and the Jesuitical faction of France." He also strongly recommended an increase of the British navy and a policy of protecting the Huguenots in their French seaports. But he judged

the Netherlands an ill-chosen field for fighting the main duel out with Spain. There, Philip was firmly seated in well-furnished cities, where he could mass troops and munitions of war at pleasure. To maintain an opposition on the side of Holland was of course necessary. But the really vulnerable point in the huge Spanish empire seemed to him to be its ill-defended territory in the West Indies. Let then the Protestant League, if possible, be placed upon a firmer basis. Let war in the Low Countries be prosecuted without remission. But, at the same time, let the English use their strongest weapon, attack by sea. Descents might be made from time to time upon the Spanish ports, as Drake had already harried Vera Cruz, and was afterwards to fall on Cadiz. Buccaneering and filibustering expeditions against the Spanish fleets which brought back treasure across the Indian main, were not to be contemned. But he believed that the most efficient course would be to plant a colony upon the American continent, which should at the same time be a source of strength to England and a hostile outpost for incursions into the Spanish settlements. Fulke Greville has devoted a large portion of his *Life* to the analysis of Sidney's opinions on these subjects. He sums them up as follows: "Upon these and the like assumptions he resolved there were but two ways left to frustrate this ambitious monarch's designs. The one, that which diverted Hannibal, and by setting fire on his own house made him draw in his spirits to comfort his heart; the other, that of Jason, by fetching away his golden fleece and not suffering any one man quietly to enjoy that which every man so much affected."

In the autumn of 1584 Sidney sat again in the House of Commons, where he helped to forward the bill for Raleigh's expedition to Virginia. This in fact was an important step in the direction of his favourite scheme; for his view of the American colony was that it should be a real "plantation, not like an asylum for fugitives, a *bellum piraticum* for banditti, or any such base *ramas* of people; but as an emporium for the confluence of all nations that love or profess any kind of virtue or commerce." Parliament next year had to take strong measures against the Jesuits, who were already fomenting secret conspiracies to dethrone or assassinate the queen. The session ended in March, and in April Raleigh started for the New World. Three months later Sidney received a commission to share the Mastership of the Ordnance with his uncle Warwick. He found that department of the public service in a lamentable plight, owing to Elizabeth's parsimony; and soon after his appointment, he risked her displeasure by firmly pressing for a thorough replenishment of the stores upon which England's efficiency as a belligerent would depend.

It was probably in this year that Sidney took up his pen to defend his uncle Leicester against the poisonous libel, popularly known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, and generally ascribed to the Jesuit Parsons. We possess the rough draft of his discourse, which proves convincingly that he at least was persuaded of the earl's innocence. He does not even deign to answer the charges of "dissimulation, hypocrisy, adultery, falsehood, treachery, poison, rebellion, treason, cowardice, atheism, and what not," except by a flat denial,

and a contemptuous interrogation: "what is it else but such a bundle of railings, as if it came from the mouth of some half-drunk scold in a tavern?" By far the larger portion of the defence is occupied with an elaborate exhibition of the pedigree and honours of the House of Dudley, in reply to the hint that Edmund, Leicester's grandfather, was basely born. Sidney, as we have seen, set great store on his own descent from the Dudleys, which he rated higher than his paternal ancestry; and this aspersion on their origin inspired him with unmeasured anger. At the close of the pamphlet he throws down the glove to his anonymous antagonist, and defies him to single combat. "And, from the date of this writing, imprinted and published, I will three months expect thine answer." Horace Walpole was certainly not justified in calling this spirited, but ill-balanced composition "by far the best specimen of his abilities."

June 1585 marked an era in the foreign policy of Elizabeth. She received a deputation from the Netherlands, who offered her the sovereignty of the United Provinces if she would undertake their cause. This offer she refused. But the recent adhesion of the French Crown to what was called the Holy League, rendered it necessary that she should do something. Accordingly, she agreed to send 6000 men to the Low Countries, holding Flushing and Brill with the Castle of Rammekins in pledge for the repayment of the costs of this expedition. Sidney began now to be spoken of as the most likely governor of Flushing. But at this moment his thoughts were directed rather to the New World than to action in Flanders. We have already

seen why he believed it best to attack Spain there. A letter written to him by Ralph Lane from Virginia echoes his own views upon this topic. The governor of the new plantation strongly urged him to head a force against what Greville called "that rich and desert West Indian mine." Passing by the islands of St. John and Hispaniola, Lane had observed their weakness. "How greatly a small force would garboil him here, when two of his most richest and strongest islands took such alarms of us, not only landing, but dwelling upon them, with only a hundred and twenty men, I refer it to your judgment." Sidney, moreover, had grown to distrust Burleigh's government of England. "Nature," says Greville, "guiding his eyes first to his native country, he found greatness of worth and place counterpoised there by the arts of power and favour. The stirring spirits sent abroad as fuel, to keep the flame far off; and the effeminate made judges of dangers which they fear, and honour which they understand not." He saw "how the idle-censuring faction at home had won ground of the active adventurers abroad;" he perceived the queen's "governors to sit at home in their soft chairs, playing fast and loose with them that ventured their lives abroad." All these considerations put together made him more than lukewarm about the Netherlands campaign and less than eager to take office under so egotistical an administration. It was his cherished scheme to join in some private enterprise, the object of which should be the enfeeblement of Spain and the strengthening of England beyond the Atlantic.

The thoughts which occupied his mind took definite shape in the summer of 1585. "The next step which

he intended into the world was an expedition of his own projecting; wherein he fashioned the whole body, with purpose to become head of it himself. I mean the last employment but one of Sir Francis Drake to the West Indies." With these words Greville introduces a minute account of Sidney's part in that famous adventure. He worked hard at the project, stirring up the several passions which might induce men of various sympathies to furnish assistance by money or by personal participation.

"To martial men he opened wide the door of sea and land for fame and conquest. To the nobly ambitious, the far stage of America to win honour in. To the religious divines, besides a new apostolical calling of the lost heathen to the Christian faith, a large field of reducing poor Christians misled by the idolatry of Rome to their mother primitive church. To the ingeniously industrious, variety of natural riches for new mysteries and manufactures to work upon. To the merchant, with a simple people a fertile and unexhausted earth. To the fortune-bound, liberty. To the curious, a fruitful work of innovation. Generally, the word gold was an attractive adamant to make men venture that which they have in hope to grow rich by that which they have not."

Moreover he "won thirty gentlemen of great blood and state here in England, every man to sell one hundred pounds land" for fitting out a fleet. While firmly resolved to join the first detachment which should sail from Plymouth, he had to keep his plans dark; for the queen would not hear of his engaging in such ventures. It was accordingly agreed between him and Sir Francis that the latter should go alone to Plymouth, and that Sir Philip should meet him there upon some plausible

excuse. When they had weighed anchor, Sidney was to share the chief command with Drake. Sir Francis in due course of time set off; and early in September he sent a message praying urgently for his associate's presence. It so happened that just at this time Don Antonio of Portugal was expected at Plymouth, and Philip obtained leave to receive him there. From this point I shall let Fulke Greville tell the story in his own old-fashioned language:—

"Yet I that had the honour, as of being bred with him from his youth, so now by his own choice of all England to be his loving and beloved Achates in this journey, observing the countenance of this gallant mariner more exactly than Sir Philip's leisure served him to do, after we were laid in bed acquainted him with my observation of the discountenance and depression which appeared in Sir Francis, as if our coming were both beyond his expectation, and desire. Nevertheless that ingenuous spirit of Sir Philip's, though apt to give me credit, yet not apt to discredit others, made him suspend his own and labour to change or qualify by judgment; till within some few days after, finding the ships neither ready according to promise, nor possibly to be made ready in many days, and withal observing some sparks of false fire breaking out from his yoke-fellow daily, it pleased him in the freedom of our friendship to return me my own stock with interest.

"All this while Don Antonio landed not; the fleet seemed to us, like the weary passengers' inn, still to go farther from our desires; letters came from the Court to hasten it away; but it may be the leaden feet and nimble thoughts of Sir Francis wrought in the day, and unwrought by night, while he watched an opportunity to discover us without being discovered.

"For within a few days after, a post steals up to the Court, upon whose arrival an alarm is presently taken: messengers sent away to stay us, or if we refused, to stay the whole fleet. Notwithstanding this first Mercury, his errand

being partly advertised to Sir Philip beforehand, was intercepted upon the way; his letters taken from him by two resolute soldiers in mariners' apparel, brought instantly to Sir Philip, opened and read. The next was a more imperial mandate, carefully conveyed and delivered to himself by a peer of this realm; carrying with it in the one hand grace, the other thunder. The grace was an offer of an instant employment under his uncle, then going general into the Low Countries; against which as though he would gladly have demurred, yet the confluence of reason, transcendency of power, fear of staying the whole fleet, made him instantly sacrifice all these self-places to the duty of obedience."

In plain words, then, Sir Francis Drake, disliking the prospect of an equal in command, played Sir Philip Sidney false by sending private intelligence to Court. The queen expressed her will so positively that Sidney had to yield. At the same time it was settled that he should go into the Netherlands, under his uncle Leicester, holding her Majesty's commission as Governor of Flushing and Rammekins. By this rapid change of events his destiny was fixed. Drake set sail on the 14th of September. Two months later, on the 16th of November, Sidney left England for his post in the Low Countries. I ought here to add that at some time during this busy summer his daughter, Elizabeth, afterwards Countess of Rutland, was born.

Sidney's achievements in the Netherlands, except as forming part of his short life, claim no particular attention. He was welcomed by Count Maurice of Nassau, the eldest son of William, Prince of Orange; and gleanings from letters of the time show that folk expected much from his activity and probity. But he enjoyed narrow scope for the employment of his abilities. Rammekins, the fortress which commanded Flushing, was

inadequately furnished and badly garrisoned. The troops were insufficient, and so ill-paid that mutinies were always imminent. In one of his despatches, urgently demanding fresh supplies, he says: "I am in a garrison as much able to command Flushing as the Tower is to answer for London." The Dutch government did not please him: he found "the people far more careful than the government in all things touching the public welfare." With the plain speech that was habitual to him, he demanded more expenditure of English money. This irritated the queen, and gave his enemies at Court occasion to condemn him in his absence as ambitious and proud. He began to show signs of impatience with Elizabeth. "If her Majesty were the fountain, I would fear, considering what I daily find, that we should wax dry." This bitter taunt he vented in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham. Meanwhile the Earl of Leicester arrived upon the 10th of December, and made matters worse. He laid himself out for honours of all sorts, accepting the title of Governor-General over the United Provinces, and coquetting with some vague scheme of being chosen for their sovereign. Imposing but impotent, Leicester had no genius for military affairs. The winter of 1585-86 dragged through, with nothing memorable to relate.

The following season, however, was marked by several important incidents in Philip Sidney's private life. First, Lady Sidney joined her husband at Flushing. Then on the 5th of May Sir Henry Sidney died in the bishop's palace at Worcester. His body was embalmed and sent to Penshurst. His heart was buried at Ludlow; his entrails in the precincts of Worcester Cathedral.

So passed from life Elizabeth's sturdy servant in Ireland and Wales; a man, as I conceive him, of somewhat limited capacity and stubborn temper, but true as steel, and honest in the discharge of very trying duties. Later in the same year, upon the 9th of August, Lady Mary Sidney yielded up her gentle spirit. Of her there is nothing to be written but the purest panegyric. Born of the noblest blood, surviving ambitious relatives who reached at royalty and perished, losing health and beauty in the service of an exacting queen, suffering poverty at Court, supporting husband and children through all trials with wise counsel and sweet hopeful temper, she emerges with pale lustre from all the actors of that time to represent the perfect wife and mother in a lady of unpretending, but heroic, dignity. Sidney would have been the poorer for the loss of these parents, if his own life had been spared. As it was, he survived his mother but two months.

In July he distinguished himself by the surprise and capture of the little town of Axel. Leicester rewarded him for this service with the commission of colonel. Elizabeth resented his promotion. She wished the colonelcy for Count Hohenlohe, or Hollock, a brave but drunken soldier. Walsingham wrote upon the occasion: "She layeth the blame upon Sir Philip, as a thing by him ambitiously sought. I see her Majesty very apt upon every light occasion to find fault with him." Ambition, not of the vaulting kind, which "overleaps itself," but of a steady, persistent, intellectual stamp, was, indeed, I think, the leading quality in Sidney's nature. From the courtiers of the period, the Leicesters, Oxfords, Ormonds, Hattons, and so forth,

this mark of character honourably distinguished him. And, if he had but lived, Elizabeth, who judged her servants with some accuracy, might by judicious curbing and parsimonious encouragement have tempered the fine steel of his frailty into a blade of trenchant edge. There was nothing ignoble, nothing frivolous in his ambition. It was rather of such mettle as made the heroes of the commonwealth: pure and un-self-seeking, but somewhat acrid. And now he fretted himself too much because of evil-doers; impatiently demanded men and munitions from England; vented his bile in private letters against Leicester. Sidney was justified by events. The campaign dragged negligently on; and the Commander of the Forces paid more attention to banquets and diplomatic intrigues than to the rough work of war. But the tone adopted by him in his irritation was hardly prudent for so young and so comparatively needy a gentleman.

Whatever he found to blame in Leicester's conduct of affairs, Sidney did not keep aloof; but used every effort to inspire his uncle with some of his own spirit. At the end of August they were both engaged in reducing the little fort of Doesburg on the Yssel, which had importance as the key to Zutphen. It fell upon the 2d of September; and on the 13th Zutphen was invested—Lewis William of Nassau, Sir John Norris, and Sir Philip Sidney commanding the land-forces, and Leicester blockading the approach by water. The Duke of Parma, acting for Spain, did all he could to reinforce the garrison with men and provisions. News came upon the 21st to Leicester that a considerable convoy was at Deventer waiting an opportunity to enter the town. He resolved

to cut off these supplies, and fixed an early hour of the 22d, which was a Thursday, for this operation. We have a letter, the last which Sidney penned before his fatal wound, dated from the camp at Zutphen upon the morning of the engagement. It recommends Richard Smyth, "her Majesty's old servant," to Sir Francis Walsingham, and is one among several writings of the kind which show how mindful Sidney was of humble friends and people in distress. The 22d of September opened gloomily. So thick a mist covered the Flemish lowlands that a man could not see farther than ten paces. Sidney, leading a troop of two hundred horsemen, pushed his way up to the walls of Zutphen. Chivalrous punctilio caused him to be ill-defended, for meeting Sir William Pelham in light armour, he threw off his cuisses, and thus exposed himself to unnecessary danger. The autumn fog, which covered every object, suddenly dispersed; and the English now found themselves confronted by a thousand horsemen of the enemy, and exposed to the guns of the town. They charged, and Sidney's horse was killed under him. He mounted another, and joined in the second charge. Reinforcements came up, and a third charge was made, during which he received a wound in the left leg. The bullet, which some supposed to have been poisoned, entered above the knee, broke the bone, and lodged itself high up in the thigh. His horse took fright, and carried him at a gallop from the field. He kept his seat, however; and when the animal was brought to order, had himself carried to Leicester's station. On the way occurred the incident so well-known to every one who is acquainted with his name. "Being thirsty with excess of bleeding,

he called for drink, which was presently brought him; but as he was putting the bottle to his mouth, he saw a poor soldier carried along, who had eaten his last at the same feast, ghastly casting up his eyes at the bottle, which Sir Philip perceiving, took it from his head before he drank, and delivered it to the poor man, with these words, *Thy necessity is yet greater than mine.* And when he had pledged this poor soldier, he was presently carried to Arnheim."

At Arnheim he lay twenty-five days in the house of a lady named Gruitthueisens. At first the surgeons who attended him had good hopes of his recovery. Ten days after the event Leicester wrote to Walsingham: "All the worst days be passed, and he amends as well as possible in this time." Friends were around him—his wife, his brothers Robert and Thomas, and the excellent minister, George Gifford, whom he sent for on the 30th. The treatment of the wound exposed him to long and painful operations, which he bore with a sweet fortitude that moved the surgeons to admiration. With Gifford and other godly men he held discourses upon religion and the future of the soul. He told Gifford that "he had walked in a vague course; and these words he spake with great vehemence both of speech and gesture, and doubled it to the intent that it might be manifest how unfeignedly he meant to turn more thoughts unto God than ever." It is said that he amused some hours of tedious leisure by composing a poem on *La Cuisse Rompue*, which was afterwards sung to soothe him. He also contrived to write "a large epistle in very pure and eloquent Latin" to his friend Belarius the divine. Both of these are lost.

As time wore on it appeared that the cure was not advancing. After the sixteenth day, says Greville, "the very shoulder-bones of this delicate patient were worn through his skin." He suffered from sharp pangs which "stang him by fits," and felt internally that his case was desperate. "One morning lifting up the clothes for change and ease of his body, he smelt some extraordinary noisome savour about him, differing from oils and salves, as he conceived." This he judged, and judged rightly, to be the sign of "inward mortification, and a welcome messenger of death." Thereupon he called the ministers into his presence, "and before them made such a confession of Christian faith as no book but the heart can truly and feelingly deliver." Death had its terrors for his soul; but he withstood them manfully, seeking peace and courage in the sacrifice of all earthly affections. "There came to my mind," he said to Gifford, "a vanity in which I delighted, whereof I had not rid myself. I rid myself of it, and presently my joy and comfort returned." Soon he was able to declare: "I would not change my joy for the empire of the world." Yet, up to the very last, he did not entirely despair of life. This is proved by the very touching letter he wrote to John Wier, a famous physician, and a friend of his. It runs thus in Latin: "Mi Wiere, veni, veni. De vitâ periclitor et te cupio. Nec vivus, nec mortuus, ero ingratus. Plura non possum, sed obnixe oro ut festines. Vale. Tuus Ph. Sidney." "My dear friend Wier, come, come. I am in peril of my life, and long for you. Neither living nor dead shall I be ungrateful. I cannot write more, but beg you urgently to hurry. Farewell. Your Ph. Sidney." In this way several days passed slowly on.

He had made his will upon the 30th of September. This he now revised, adding a codicil in which he remembered many friends and servants. The document may be read in Collins's *Sidney Papers*. Much of it is occupied with provisions for the child, with which his wife was pregnant at this time, and of which she was afterwards delivered still-born. But the thoughtful tenor of the whole justifies Greville in saying that it "will ever remain for a witness to the world that those sweet and large affections in him could no more be contracted with the narrowness of pain, grief, or sickness, than any sparkle of our immortality can be privately buried in the shadow of death.'

Reflecting upon the past he exclaimed: "All things in my former life have been vain, vain, vain." In this mood he bade one of his friends burn the *Arcadia*; but we know not whether he expressed the same wish about *Astrophel and Stella*. On the morning of the 17th of October it was clear that he had but a few hours to live. His brother Robert gave way to passionate grief in his presence, which Philip gently stayed, taking farewell of him in these memorable words: "Love my memory, cherish my friends; their faith to me may assure you they are honest. But above all, govern your will and affections by the will and word of your Creator; in me beholding the end of this world with all her vanities." Shortly afterwards he sank into speechlessness, and the bystanders thought that what he had greatly dreaded—namely, death without consciousness, would befall him. Yet when they prayed him for some sign of his "inward joy and consolation in God," he held his hand up and stretched it forward for a little while. About

two o'clock in the afternoon he again responded to a similar appeal by setting his hands together in the attitude of prayer upon his breast, and thus he expired.

Sidney's death sent a thrill through Europe. Leicester, who truly loved him, wrote upon the 25th, in words of passionate grief, to Walsingham. Elizabeth declared that she had lost her mainstay in the struggle with Spain. Duplessis Mornay bewailed his loss "not for England only, but for all Christendom." Mendoza, the Spanish secretary, said that though he could not but rejoice at the loss to his master of such a foe, he yet lamented to see Christendom deprived of so great a light, and bewailed poor widowed England. The Netherlanders begged to be allowed to keep his body, and promised to erect a royal monument to his memory, "yea, though the same should cost half-a-ton of gold in the building." But this petition was rejected; and the corpse, after embalmment, was removed to Flushing. There it lay eight days; and on the 1st of November the English troops accompanied it with military honours to the *Black Prince*, a vessel which had belonged to Sidney. On the 5th it reached Tower Hill, and on the 16th of February it was buried with pomp in St. Paul's. This long delay between the landing in London and the interment arose from certain legal complications, which rendered the discharge of Sidney's debts difficult. Walsingham told Leicester that he would have to "pay for him about six thousand pounds, which I do assure your Lordship hath brought me into a most desperate and hard state, which I weigh nothing in respect of the loss of the gentleman who was my chief worldly comfort." Lest this should seem to reflect ill upon Sidney's

character, it must be added that he had furnished Walsingham with a power of attorney to sell land, and had expressly considered all his creditors in his will. But his own death happened so close upon his father's, and the will was so imperfect touching the sale of land, that his wishes could not be carried into effect. This, added Walsingham, "doth greatly afflict me, that a gentleman that hath lived so unspotted in reputation, and had so great care to see all men satisfied, should be so exposed to the outcry of his creditors." When the obstacles had been surmounted the funeral was splendid and public. And the whole nation went into mourning. "It was accounted a sin," says the author of *The Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney*, "for any gentleman of quality, for many months after, to appear at Court or City in any light or gaudy apparel."

I have told the story of Sidney's last days briefly, using the testimony of those who knew him best, or who were present at his death-bed. Comment would be superfluous. There is a singular beauty in the uncomplaining, thoughtful, manly sweetness of the young hero cut off in his prime. Numberless minute touches, of necessity omitted here, confirm the opinion that Sidney possessed unique charm and exercised a spell over those who came in contact with him. All the letters and reports which deal with that long agony breathe a heartfelt tenderness, which proves how amiable and how admirable he was. The character must have been wellnigh perfect which inspired persons so different as the Earl of Leicester, George Gifford, and Fulke Greville with the same devoted love. We have not to deal merely with the record of an edifying end, but with

the longing retrospect of men whose best qualities had been drawn forth by sympathy with his incomparable goodness.

The limits of this book make it impossible to give an adequate account of the multitudinous literary tributes to Sidney's memory, which appeared soon after his decease. Oxford contributed *Exequiae* and *Peplus;* Cambridge shed *Lacrymae;* great wits and little, to the number it is said of some two hundred, expressed their grief with more or less felicity of phrase. For us the value of these elegiac verses is not great. But it is of some importance to know what men of weight and judgment said of him. His dearest and best friend has been so often quoted in these pages that we are now familiar with Greville's life-long adoration. Yet I cannot omit the general character he gives of Sidney:

"Indeed he was a true model of worth; a man fit for conquest, plantation, reformation, or what action soever is greatest and hardest among men: withal, such a lover of mankind and goodness that whoever had any real parts in him, found comfort, participation, and protection to the uttermost of his power: like Zephyrus, he giving life where he blew. The universities abroad and at home accounted him a general Mecaenas of learning; dedicated their books to him; and communicated every invention or improvement of knowledge with him. Soldiers honoured him, and were so honoured by him as no man thought he marched under the true banner of Mars that had not obtained Sir Philip Sidney's approbation. Men of affairs in most parts of Christendom entertained correspondency with him. But what speak I of these, with whom his own ways and ends did concur? Since, to descend, his heart and capacity were so large that there was not a cunning painter, a skilful engineer, an excellent musician, or any other artificer of extraordinary fame, that made not himself known to this famous spirit, and found him his true

friend without hire, and the common *rendezvous* of worth in his time."

Thomas Nash may be selected as the representative of literary men who honoured Sidney.

"Gentle Sir Philip Sidney!" he exclaims; "thou knewest what belonged to a scholar; thou knewest what pains, what toil, what travail, conduct to perfection; well couldst thou give every virtue his encouragement, every art his due, every writer his desert, cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyself. But thou art dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the sons of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted."

Lastly, we will lay the ponderous laurel-wreath, woven by grave Camden, on his tomb:

"This is that Sidney, who, as Providence seems to have sent him into the world to give the present age a specimen of the ancients, so did it on a sudden recall him, and snatch him from us, as more worthy of heaven than earth; thus where virtue comes to perfection, it is gone in a trice, and the best things are never lasting. Rest then in peace, O Sidney, if I may be allowed this address! We will not celebrate your memory with tears but admiration; whatever we loved in you, as the best of authors speaks of that best governor of Britain, whatever we admired in you, still continues, and will continue in the memories of men, the revolutions of ages, and the annals of time. Many, as inglorious and ignoble, are buried in oblivion; but Sidney shall live to all posterity. For, as the Grecian poet has it, virtue's beyond the reach of fate."

The note of tenderness, on which I have already dwelt, sounds equally in these sentences of the needy man of letters and the learned antiquarian.

It would be agreeable, if space permitted, to turn the

pages of famous poets who immortalised our hero; to glean high thoughts from Constable's sonnets to Sir Philip Sidney's soul; to dwell on Raleigh's well-weighed quatrains; to gather pastoral honey from Spenser's *Astrophel*, or graver meditations from his *Ruins of Time*. But these are in the hands of every one; and now, at the close of his biography, I will rather let the voice of unpretending affection be heard. Few but students, I suppose, are familiar with the name of Matthew Roydon, or know that he was a writer of some distinction. Perhaps it was love for Sidney which inspired him with the musical but unequal poem from which I select three stanzas:

"Within these woods of Arcady
He chief delight and pleasure took;
And on the mountain Partheny,
Upon the crystal liquid brook,
The Muses met him every day,
That taught him sing, to write and say.

"When he descended down the mount,
His personage seemed most divine;
A thousand graces one might count
Upon his lovely cheerful eyne.
To hear him speak, and sweetly smile,
You were in Paradise the while.

"A sweet attractive kind of grace;
A full assurance given by looks;
Continual comfort in a face;
The lineaments of Gospel books:
I trow that countenance cannot lie,
Whose thoughts are legible in the eye."

Among Spenser's works, incorporated in his *Astrophel*, occurs an elegy of languid but attractive sweetness, which

the great poet ascribes to the Countess of Pembroke, sister by blood to Sidney, and sister of his soul. Internal evidence might lead to the opinion that this "doleful lay of Clorinda," as it is usually called, was not written by Lady Pembroke, but was composed for her by the author of the *Faery Queen*. Yet the style is certainly inferior to that of Spenser at its best, and critics of mark incline to accept it literally as her production. This shall serve me as an excuse for borrowing some of its verses:

"What cruel hand of cursèd foe unknown
Hath cropped the stalk which bore so fair a flower?
Untimely cropped, before it well were grown,
And clean defacèd in untimely hour!
Great loss to all that ever him did see,
Great loss to all, but greatest loss to me!

"Break now your garlands, oh, ye shepherds' lasses,
Since the fair flower which them adorned is gone;
The flower which them adorned is gone to ashes;
Never again let lass put garland on;
Instead of garland, wear sad cypress now,
And bitter elder broken from the bough."

The reiteration of phrases in these softly-falling stanzas recalls the plaining of thrush or blackbird in the dewy silence of May evenings. But at the close of her long descant, Urania changes to thoughts of the heaven whose light has been increased by the "fair and glittering rays" of Astrophel. Then her inspiration takes a loftier flight. Meditations are suggested which prelude to *Lycidas* and *Adonais*. A parallel, indeed both of diction and idea between this wilding flower of song and the magnificent double-rose of Shelley's threnody on Keats can be traced in the following four stanzas:—

"But that immortal spirit, which was decked
With all the dowries of celestial grace,
By sovereign choice from the heavenly choirs select,
And lineally derived from angel's race,
Oh, what is now of it become, aread!
Ah me, can so divine a thing be dead?

"Ah no! it is not dead, nor can it die,
But lives for aye in blissful paradise,
Where, like a new-born babe it soft doth lie,
In beds of lilies wrapped in tender wise,
And compassed all about with roses sweet
And dainty violets from head to feet.

"There lieth he in everlasting bliss,
Sweet spirit, never fearing more to die;
Nor dreading harm from any foes of his,
Nor fearing savage beasts' more cruelty:
Whilst we here, wretches, wail his private lack,
And with vain vows do often call him back.

"But live thou there still, happy, happy spirit,
And give us leave thee here thus to lament,
Not thee that dost thy heaven's joy inherit,
But our own selves that here in dole are drent.
Thus do we weep and wail and wear our eyes,
Mourning in others our own miseries."

One couplet by a nameless playwright upon the death of Sidney's aunt by marriage, the Lady Jane Grey, shall serve to end this chapter:

"An innocent to die, what is it less
But to add angels to heaven's happiness!"

Epilogue

When we review the life of Sir Philip Sidney, it is certain that one thought will survive all other thoughts

about him in our mind. This man, we shall say, was born to show the world what goes to the making of an English gentleman. But he belonged to his age; and the age of Elizabeth differed in many essential qualities from the age of Anne and from the age of Victoria. Sidney was the typical English gentleman of the modern era at the moment of transition from the mediæval period. He was the hero of our Renaissance. His nature combined chivalry and piety, courtly breeding and humane culture, statesmanship and loyalty, in what Wotton so well called "the very essence of congruity." Each of these elements may be found singly and more strikingly developed in other characters of his epoch. In him they were harmoniously mixed and fused as by some spiritual chemistry. In him they shone with a lustre peculiar to the "spacious times of great Elizabeth," with a grace and purity distinctive of his unique personality. To make this image charming—this image, not of king or prince or mighty noble, but of a perfect gentleman—the favour of illustrious lineage and the grave beauty of his presence contributed in no small measure. There was something Phœbean in his youthful dignity:

> "When he descended down the mount,
> His personage seemed most divine."

Men of weight and learning were reminded by him of the golden antique past: "Providence seems to have sent him into the world to give the present age a specimen of the ancients." What the Athenians called καλοκαγαθία, that blending of physical and moral beauty and goodness in one pervasive virtue, distinguished him

from the crowd of his countrymen, with whom goodness too often assumed an outer form of harshness and beauty leaned to effeminacy or insolence. He gave the present age a specimen of the ancients by the plasticity of his whole nature, the exact correspondence of spiritual and corporeal excellences, which among Greeks would have marked him out for sculpturesque idealisation.

It was to his advantage that he held no office of importance, commanded no great hereditary wealth, had done no deeds that brought him envy, had reached no station which committed him to rough collision with the world's brazen interests. Death, and the noble manner of his death, set seal to the charter of immortality which the expectation of contemporaries had already drafted. He was withdrawn from the contention of our earth, before time and opportunity proved or compromised his high position. Gloriously, he passed into the sphere of idealities; and as an ideal, he is for ever living and for ever admirable. Herein too there was something Greek in his good fortune; something which assimilates him to the eternal youthfulness of Hellas, and to the adolescent heroes of mythology.

This should not divert our thoughts from the fact that Sidney was essentially an Elizabethan gentleman. His chivalry belonged to a period when knightly exercises were still in vogue, when bravery attired itself in pomp, when the Mort d'Arthur retained its fascination for youths of noble nurture. Those legends needed then no adaptations from a Laureate's golden quill to make them popular. Yet they were remote enough to touch the soul with poetry, of which the

earlier and cruder associations had by time been mellowed. Knight-errantry expressed itself in careers like that of Stukeley, in expeditions like those of Drake and Raleigh. Lancelot's and Tristram's love had passed through the crucible of the Italian poets.

Sidney's piety was that of the Reformation, now at length accomplished and accepted in England after a severe struggle. Unsapped by criticism, undimmed by centuries of ease and toleration, the Anglican faith acquired reality and earnestness from the gravity of the European situation. Spain threatened to enslave the world. The Catholic reaction was rolling spiritual darkness, like a cloud, northward, over nations wavering as yet between the old and the new creed. Four years before his birth Loyola founded the Company of Jesus. During his lifetime this Order invaded province after province, spreading like leaven through populations on the verge of revolt against Rome. The Council of Trent began its sessions while he was in his cradle. Its work was finished, the final rupture of the Latin Church with Protestantism was accomplished, twenty-three years before his death at Zutphen. He grew to boyhood during Mary's reactionary reign. It is well to bear these dates in mind; they prove how exactly Sidney's life corresponded with the first stage of renascent and belligerent Catholicism. The perils of the time, brought fearfully home to himself by his sojourn in Paris on the night of St. Bartholomew, deepened religious convictions which might otherwise have been but lightly held by him. Yet he was no Puritan. Protestantism in England had as yet hardly entered upon that phase of its development. It was still possible to be sincerely

godly (as the Earl of Essex called him), without sacrificing the grace of life or the urbanities of culture.

His education was in a true sense liberal. The new learning of the Italian Renaissance had recently taken root in England, and the methods of the humanists were being applied with enthusiasm in our public schools. Ancient literature, including the philosophers and historians of Athens, formed the staple of a young man's intellectual training. Yet no class at once so frivolous and pedantic, so servile and so vicious, as the Italian humanists, monopolised the art of teaching. Roger Ascham, the tutor of princes; Sir John Cheke, at Cambridge; Camden, at Westminster; Thomas Ashton, at Shrewsbury, were men from whom nothing but sound learning and good morals could be imbibed. England enjoyed the rare advantage of receiving both Renaissance and Reformation at the same epoch. The new learning came to our shores under the garb of Erasmus rather than Filelfo. It was penetrated with sober piety and enlightened philosophy instead of idle scepticism and academical rhetoric. Thus the foundations of Sidney's culture were broadly laid; and he was enabled to build a substantial superstructure on them. No better companion of his early manhood could have been found than Languet, who combined the refinements of southern with the robust vigour of northern scholarship. The acquisition of French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish led him to compare modern authors with the classics; while his travels through Europe brought him acquainted with various manners and with the leading men of several parties. An education so complete and many-sided polished Sidney's excellent natural parts, until he shone the

mirror of accomplished gentlehood. He never forgot that, in his case, studies had to be pursued, not as an end in themselves, but as the means of fitting him for a public career. Diligent as he was in the pursuit of knowledge, he did not suffer himself to become a book-worm. Athletic exercises received as much of his attention as poetry or logic. Converse with men seemed to him more important than communion with authors in their printed works. In a word, he realised the ideal of Castiglione's courtier, and personified Plato's Euphues, in whom music was to balance gymnastic.

His breeding was that of a Court which had assumed the polish of Italy and France, and with that polish some of their vices and affectations. Yet the Court of Elizabeth was, in the main, free from such corruption as disgraced that of the Valois, and from such crimes as shed a sinister light upon the society of Florence or Ferrara. It was purer and more manly than the Court of James I., and even that remained superior to the immoralities and effeminacies of southern capitals. The queen, with all her faults, maintained a high standard among her servants. They represented the aristocracy of a whole and puissant nation, united by common patriotism and inspired by enthusiasm for their sovereign. Conflicting religious sympathies and discordant political theories might divide them; but in the hour of danger, they served their country alike, as was shown on the great day of the Spanish Armada.

Loyalty, at that epoch, still retained the sense of personal duty. The mediæval conviction that national well-being depended on maintaining a hierarchy of classes, bound together by reciprocal obligations and ascending

privileges, and presided over by a monarch who claimed the allegiance of all, had not broken down in England. This loyalty, like Protestant piety, was braced by the peculiar dangers of the State, and by the special perils to which the life of a virgin queen was now exposed. It had little in common with decrepit affection for a dynasty, or with such homage as nobles paid their prince in the Italian despotisms. It was fed by the belief that the commonwealth demanded monarchy for its support. The Stuarts had not yet brought the name of loyalty into contempt; and at the same time this virtue, losing its feudal rigidity, assumed something of romantic grace and poetic sentiment. England was personified by the lady on the throne.

In his statesmanship, Sidney displayed the independent spirit of a well-born Englishman, controlled by loyalty as we have just described it. He was equally removed from servility to his sovereign, and from the underhand subtleties of a would-be Machiavelli. In serving the queen he sought to serve the State. His Epistle on the French Match, and his Defence of Sir Henry Sidney's Irish Administration, revealed a candour rare among Elizabeth's courtiers. With regard to England's policy in Europe, he declared for a bold, and possibly a too Quixotic interference in foreign affairs. Surveying the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, Spanish tyranny and national liberties, he apprehended the situation as one of extreme gravity, and was by no means willing to temporise or trifle with it. In his young-eyed enthusiasm, so different from Burleigh's world-worn prudence, he desired that Elizabeth should place herself at the head of an alliance of the Reformed Powers.

Mature experience of the home government, however, reduced these expectations; and Sidney threw himself upon a romantic but well-weighed scheme of colonisation. In each case he recommended a great policy, defined in its object, and worthy of a powerful race, to the only people whom he thought capable of carrying it out effectively.

This kindly blending of many qualities, all of them English, all of them characteristic of Elizabethan England, made Sir Philip Sidney the ideal of his generation, and for us the sweetest interpreter of its best aspirations. The essence of congruity, determining his private and his public conduct, in so many branches of active life, caused a loving nation to hail him as their Euphues. That he was not devoid of faults, faults of temper in his dealings with friends and servants, graver faults perhaps in his love for Stella, adds to the reality of his character. Shelley was hardly justified in calling him "Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot." During those last hours upon his death-bed at Arnheim, he felt that much in his past life had been but vanity, that some things in it called for repentance. But the evil inseparable from humanity was conquered long before the end. Few spirits so blameless, few so thoroughly prepared to enter upon new spheres of activity and discipline, have left this earth. The multitudes who knew him personally, those who might have been jealous of him, and those who owed him gratitude, swelled one chorus in praise of his natural goodness, his intellectual strength and moral beauty. We who study his biography, and dwell upon their testimony to his charm, derive from Sidney the noblest lesson bequeathed by Elizabethan to Vic-

torian England. It is a lesson which can never lose its value for Greater Britain also, and for that confederated empire which shall, if fate defeat not the high aspirations of the Anglo-Saxon race, arise to be the grandest birth of future time.

THE END.

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English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

DE QUINCEY

DE QUINCEY

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

For matters of fact in the following pages the chief authorities are the collective edition of De Quincey's works in sixteen volumes, published by Messrs. A. & C. Black of Edinburgh, and the Life of De Quincey in two volumes by Mr. H. A. Page (London, John Hogg & Co., 1877). This last, the only extensive and complete Life of De Quincey in the language, contains a large quantity of biographical information supplied to Mr. Page by the family of De Quincey, and by friends and correspondents of his, much of it in the form of interesting letters and papers never before made public. Such information had long been desired in vain; and till the appearance of Mr. Page's work little more was known about De Quincey's life than had been revealed by himself in the autobiographical portions of his writings. While, however, Mr. Page's work and those autobiographical writings of De Quincey have been the main authorities for facts and dates, there have been miscellaneous gleanings from other quarters. The chronological list of De Quincey's magazine-writings drawn up by Mr. H. G. Bohn, and inserted in the article "Quincey, De" in his edition of Lowndes's Bibliographer's Manual, has been of much use; and among smaller memoirs consulted I may mention the article on De Quincey in the current edition

of the Encyclopædia Britannica, written by Mr. J. R. Findlay, one of the most intimate friends of De Quincey in his last years. At various points a little independent research has been found necessary, chiefly in the form of an inspection of the old volumes of the magazines and other periodicals in which De Quincey's papers originally appeared. For the rest, I have some advantage in having myself met and conversed with De Quincey, so as to retain a perfect recollection of his appearance, voice, and manner, and in being familiar with the scenes amid which he spent the last nine-and-twenty years of his life.

EDINBURGH,
August, 1881.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

PARENTAGE, INFANCY, AND CHILDHOOD 1

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD AND CHANGES OF SCHOOL, WITH A TOUR IN IRELAND 16

CHAPTER III.

VAGRANCY IN NORTH WALES AND IN LONDON . . . 28

CHAPTER IV.

MAINLY AT OXFORD, WITH VISITS TO LONDON AND THE LAKES 35

CHAPTER V.

BACHELOR LIFE AT THE LAKES 45

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIED LIFE AT THE LAKES: PROSTRATION UNDER OPIUM: PROVINCIAL EDITORSHIP 59

CHAPTER VII.

PARTLY IN LONDON, PARTLY AT THE LAKES, PARTLY IN EDINBURGH: THE "CONFESSIONS" AND OTHER ARTICLES IN THE "LONDON MAGAZINE," AND FIRST ARTICLES IN "BLACKWOOD" 70

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE
WHOLLY IN EDINBURGH: MORE CONTRIBUTIONS TO "BLACKWOOD," WITH ARTICLES IN "TAIT'S MAGAZINE" . . 86

CHAPTER IX.

LASSWADE AND EDINBURGH, WITH VISITS TO GLASGOW: MORE CONTRIBUTIONS TO "BLACKWOOD" AND "TAIT" . . 96

CHAPTER X.

LASSWADE, AND NO. 42 LOTHIAN STREET, EDINBURGH: THE COLLECTED WORKS: LAST DAYS OF DE QUINCEY . . 112

CHAPTER XI.

DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS . . 135

CHAPTER XII.

DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS: CLASSIFICATION AND REVIEW . 159
I. DESCRIPTIVE, BIOGRAPHICAL, AND HISTORICAL . . 160
II. SPECULATIVE, DIDACTIC, AND CRITICAL . . . 171
III. IMAGINATIVE WRITINGS AND PROSE POETRY . . 185

DE QUINCEY.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE, INFANCY, AND CHILDHOOD.

1785—1796.

De Quincey took some pains to explain that his family was not, as the form of the name might suggest, a recent French importation into England, but had come in with the Conquest. Genealogists, indeed, find that the first of the English De Quinceys was a certain companion of the Conqueror, named Richard, probably of Norwegian descent, though hailing more immediately from the village or district of Quincé in French Normandy. His descendants became great personages in England, reaching their highest in one or two De Quinceys who were Earls of Winchester in the thirteenth century. De Quincey, while dwelling with fondness on these associations with his name, admits that the Earls of Winchester and their shadowy crusading retinue "suddenly came to grief," and that most of the English De Quinceys for many generations before his own time had been very insignificant and obscure persons. With other English families of like origin, they had dropt the aristocratic prefix *De;* in addition to which

they had consented, in the easy old days of optional spelling, to be *Quincys* or *Quincies* or *Quinceys*, just as it might please their neighbours.

It seems to have been De Quincey himself, though he does not mention the matter, who resuscitated the prefix *De* (which he always wrote, however, with the small *d* and not with the capital) in his particular branch of the family. His father, at all events, called himself Thomas Quincey. This father of De Quincey must have been a rather interesting man. He is described by his son as having been "literary to the extent of having written a book;" which book has been identified by very recent research with an anonymous octavo volume or pamphlet published in London in 1775, and entitled *A Short Tour in the Midland Counties of England, performed in the Summer of* 1772: *together with an Account of a Similar Excursion undertaken September* 1774. The greater part of the contents of the volume had previously appeared in five successive instalments in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May, June, July, August, and September, 1774, under the title "A Tour in the Midland Counties of England, performed in the summer of 1772. (By T—— Q——);" and the separate publication, as a preface explains, was occasioned partly by the author's resentment of the liberties that had been taken with the original text by the editor of the magazine, and partly by a desire to improve the piece into "a less soporific potion for the mental taste of his friends." Though in the form of brief business-like notes, the performance is altogether very creditable. The jottings give the author's observations of the state of farming, draining, manufactures, mining industry, &c., in the district traversed, with hints of decided opinions of his own on several vexed economic questions. There is

an eye also for the picturesque in scenery, and for architectural beauties or defects in towns, churches, and country seats; and the style is that of a well-educated man, accustomed to write English. Once or twice the language rises towards the poetic, and once there is an admiring quotation from Beattie's *Minstrel*, the first part of which had recently appeared. At the time of this first and only literary venture of De Quincey's father he cannot have been more than three-and-twenty years of age; and one infers, from the matter of the performance, that he was then residing in London, in some commercial occupation which took him occasionally on a circuit northwards. There is a suggestion of previous acquaintance with Lincolnshire, and of some special connexion with that county. There would be little difficulty, we suppose, in investigating these antecedents of the interesting T. Q. of 1774; meanwhile what concerns us here is that within about five years from that date he is found settled in Manchester as a rising merchant, with his town-house or place of business in Fountain Street, and with extensive transactions and correspondence, especially with Portugal, America, and the West Indies. He had then married a Miss Penson, a lady of very good family connexions, two brothers of whom, younger than herself, went out soon afterwards to Bengal as officers in the service of the East India Company. Of this marriage there were born, between 1779 and 1792, eight children in all, four of them sons and four daughters. Our De Quincey, the fifth child and the second son, was born on the 15th of August, 1785, when his father was about thirty-three years of age, and his mother about three years younger.

The memoirs of De Quincey have been wonderfully unanimous in the statement that he was born at a country

house of his father's, called Greenhay, in what was then a perfectly rustic neighbourhood, about a mile out of Manchester. The statement is a blunder. De Quincey himself distinctly informs us that he was born *in* Manchester, though he passed the whole of his childhood, after the first few weeks of his existence, in a rural seclusion near the town. He informs us further that this suburban seclusion, the habitual abode of the family after his birth, as distinct from the town-house or place of business which his father continued to keep up in Fountain Street, was first in "a pretty rustic dwelling" called *The Farm*, and not till about 1791 or 1792 in the larger country-house of *Greenhay*, which his father had then just built and equipped at an expense of about 6000*l*. The name *Greenhay*, he adds, was then an invention of his mother's, partly in recognition of the vicinity of a hamlet called Greenhill, and partly to signify, by revival of the old English word *hay*, meaning hedge or hedge-row (same as the French *haie*), that the domicile was characteristically a country mansion, with lawns and gardens, sequestered within gates and a verdant ring-fence. The priority of "The Farm" to "Greenhay" is indubitable.

In the life of De Quincey even such a trifle is worth noting. In no autobiography do the recollections of mere infancy and childhood occupy so much space, or count for so much, as in his. Accordingly, while the general impression he conveys of himself from his second or third year onwards is that of a very diminutive, shy, sensitive, and dreamy child, moving about, when out of doors, always on green turf or in garden-walks, and within doors always among young brothers and sisters in a house of wealthy and even luxurious elegance, the actual incidents of his infancy and childhood which he

has embalmed for us so carefully in such marvellous prose have to be distributed between the two habitations above named, once visible on the rustic margin of Manchester, but now engulfed in its brick and uproar. It was at "The Farm" that he had the "remarkable dream of terrific grandeur about a favourite nurse," which proved to him afterwards that his dreaming tendencies had been constitutional; it was here that the first sense of pathos had come over him, in watching, very early in spring, the appearance of some crocuses; and it was here that he had his first experiences of death in a household. Of his three sisters older than himself, Jane, the second in age, died before he was two years old; and he could remember the whisper that ran through the house, muffled so as not to reach his mother, of some harsh treatment of the dying sufferer by one of the female servants. Then, four years later, came the death of the eldest sister, Elizabeth, the gentlest and best beloved, his instructress and constant companion, whose image, and the signs of whose noble intellectual promise in her face and forehead, though she had not attained her tenth year, were to dwell with him, like a visionary guardianship from the spiritual world, through all the future years of his own life. Who can forget the pages in which he tells of the trance of reverie and delirium which fell upon him that bright midsummer day, when he had stolen alone into the chamber where the little corpse lay, and, in the flood of sunshine that streamed into the chamber from the cloudless sky without, there seemed suddenly to moan forth a solemn wind, "a wind that might have swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries," rising and swelling till the eye partook of the magic of the ear, and the billows of unearthly music seemed to tend to a shaft that ran upwards in quest of

the throne of God? All these incidents, in their literal original, or in the transfiguration given to them by poetic memory, have to be referred to the period when "Greenhay" was yet to come; and, when we do enter that house, in the year 1792, it is with the knowledge of a new fact in the family history. De Quincey, then in his seventh year, had seen, he tells us, so little of his father that, if the two had met anywhere by chance, they would not have known each other. The merchant, though in the prime of his manhood, had long been the prey of a pulmonary consumption; and for several years he had been in the habit, for the benefit of his health, while attending to his foreign and colonial business transactions, of residing as much as possible in Lisbon or Madeira, or in some of the West India Islands, with but occasional visits to England. But, one day, when the house of Greenhay was still somewhat of a novelty, and the mother had gone to meet her invalid husband at the port where he was expected, it was known to the children that their father was coming home. He was coming home, in fact, to die. For hours, in the summer evening, the children and servants had been on the lawn before the house, listening for the sound of wheels in the winding lane that led from the main road; and it was not till near midnight that the horses' heads emerged from the gloom, the carriage then approaching the house at a hearse-like pace, and the white pillows on which the invalid was propped catching the eye of the child and striking his imagination with a ghastly effect. For several weeks the invalid languished on a sofa, his quietest and most dreamy child admitted to him in his waking hours more than the rest, and standing beside him with the rest when he died.

By the father's death, the family, consisting of the

mother and six children, the last posthumously born, was left poorer than it had been, but still in clear possession of 1600*l.* a year. The allowance for each of the four sons was to be 150*l.* a year, and that for each of the two surviving daughters 100*l.* a year, while the rest seems to have been left at the disposal of the mother. In the guardianship of the children till they came of age there were associated with the mother four selected friends of the father, living in or near Manchester; but the real management for the time was with the mother. De Quincey's mentions of his mother are uniformly respectful and reverent, with just a shade of critical remark on that side of her character which ruled her relations to himself. Of stately social ways and refined tastes, and of even rare natural endowments, she was, De Quincey says, though in no sense professedly a *literary* woman, yet emphatically "an *intellectual* woman," whose letters among her friends, if they could have been collected and published, would have been found hardly inferior, for the racy grace of their idiomatic English, to those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. But there was, he hints, a touch too much of Roman firmness or hardness in her, which, especially after her friendship with Hannah More and other notables of the Clapham Evangelical Sect had confirmed her in their rigid views of religion, disqualified her for the peculiarly sympathetic treatment required by at least one of her sons. The present writer knew a venerable lady who, in her youth, had seen much of De Quincey's mother; and her account tallied closely with De Quincey's own. Indeed, this venerable lady, being herself a strict religionist of the antique evangelical type, retained to the last an opinion of De Quincey which she had probably caught from colloquies with his mother con-

cerning him in his most dubious days. A stately woman, every inch a lady, moving in the best county circles, and with her feet on the Rock of Ages,—such was, and always had been, De Quincey's mother; as for the son, celebrity or no celebrity, what was he but a waif?

For four years after the death of De Quincey's father, or from 1792 to 1796, the widow continued to live at Greenhay, with her orphan children about her, doing her best for their education. We hardly know when De Quincey began to read and write; but, from all he tells us of the years of his life that have now been sketched, one infers that, with perhaps too little music or other kindred recreation in the house, reading had been absolutely unrestricted for him and his sisters, and that he had been always with one of them when he could, or in a quiet corner by himself, conning some delicious piece of juvenile verse or prose. Dr. Johnson and Cowper were then the English authors of greatest recent repute; but, in addition to the Bible, it is of Mrs. Barbauld's books and the *Arabian Nights* that we hear as first fascinating the De Quincey children and moving them to questions. In one very suggestive chapter, treating of the power of individual passages in books to find out the minds fitted for their reception, De Quincey cites as an instance in his own case the effect upon him, in his childhood, of the opening passage in the story of Aladdin. That there should be a magician dwelling in the depths of Africa, and aware of an enchanted lamp, imprisoned somewhere in a subterranean chamber, which could be found out only by the child predestined for the adventure, and that this magician, by putting his ear to the ground and listening to the sounds of the footsteps of all the human beings living on the globe, should know for certain that the

predestined finder of the lamp was a little boy then running about, thousands of miles off, in the streets of Bagdad, was a revelation of the universal connexions of things which gave rise to no end of pondering. This from the *Arabian Nights*, and an anecdote of noble revenge picked out of a historical miscellany, were, we are given to understand, the passages of literature that had fastened most strongly on the little De Quincey at the time when his sister Elizabeth was still alive to share his enthusiasms. At the date at which we have now arrived, however, there was a change of circumstances. The boy had come to an age when home-teaching and miscellaneous voluntary reading were to be supplemented by something more regular, in the shape of daily lessons under a tutor conveniently near. The tutor chosen was the Rev. S. H., one of the guardians of the children by their father's will, and then curate of a church in the part of Manchester called Salford. To the house of this Mr. S. H., about two miles from Greenhay, the little fellow was to trudge daily for his lessons in the morning, returning in the afternoon. This would not have mattered much if he had remained still the eldest boy in the Greenhay household. But, since the father's death, there had come to live at Greenhay, and to partake in the lessons from Mr. S. H. at Salford, Master William De Quincey himself, the very top of the family, full twelve years of age, or about five years older than Thomas. Hitherto Thomas had known little or nothing of this senior brother of his, who had been for some time with his father in Lisbon, and then, proving unmanageable, had been sent to the Grammar School of Louth in Lincolnshire. But now he was to know enough. Never was such a boy as this William De Quincey, such a boisterous, frank, pugilistic, clever,

inventive, not unlikeable, but wholly unendurable, son of eternal racket. "His genius for mischief amounted to inspiration," reports his principal victim. For no sooner had he arrived than he had taken possession of the house and all in it like a whirlwind, and poor little Thomas, as the next living thing under him, had been collared by him at once for his fag and spaniel.

It is not for nothing that De Quincey heads the long chapter of more than eighty pages in which he treats of the time of his subjection to the despotism of his stormy elder brother with the words *Introduction to the World of Strife*. Digressive as that chapter is, one receives from it a unity of general impression corresponding to the title. One can see that, during the three years and a half of which so much fun is made in the retrospect, the nervous little creature who had been linked to such a steam-engine of a brother was in the main very miserable. It was not merely that his brother had picked a quarrel with the boys of a cotton-factory on the skirts of Manchester, just at the point where the road from Greenhay entered the town by a particular bridge, and that once or twice every day, as they went and came between Greenhay and their tutor's house in Salford, there had to be a battle at this spot between them and some of the factory-boys, every recurrence of which threw the little creature into new terror. It was that his very thoughts and imaginations were no longer his own, but were dictated to him and shaped for him by the energies of his companion. The war with the factory-boys itself, for example, became a double torment by being idealized by his brother into a great enterprise in which he was commander-in-chief, with absolute powers, while Thomas was the responsible second. For his conduct in the campaign from day to day in this character

of responsible second was not only incessantly discussed by the commander-in-chief in their colloquies along the road, but was the subject of merciless comment in bulletins and gazettes published by the commander-in-chief for the benefit of Mrs. Evans, the housekeeper at Greenhay, and the rest of the world there. Now he was promoted to be major-general, as having done pretty well; now he was under arrest for cowardice and was to be drummed out of the army; again, restored to his rank by the intercession of a distinguished lady (Mrs. Evans), he received also the Order of the Bath; and once he was in danger of being hanged for treacherous correspondence with the enemy. Nor was this all. Besides being commander-in-chief in the war with the factory-boys, his brother was king of an imaginary kingdom called Tigrosylvania; and poor De Quincey, to accommodate him in his Napoleonic propensities to invasion, was obliged to be king of another imaginary kingdom called Gombroon. Then not only was Gombroon liable to invasion by the Tigrosylvanians, but the wretched government of Gombroon and the low state of civilization among the Gombroonians became a subject of perpetual sarcasm on the part of the Tigrosylvanian monarch. The lowest depth of De Quincey's degradation in the matter was when his brother, having been reading an extract from Monboddo, informed him gravely that he had ascertained that the Gombroonians were still in the primitive condition of mankind, not having advanced so far as even to acquire those sedentary habits the continuance of which through ages would remove their tails, and advised him to issue an edict requiring them all to sit for at least six hours every day,—which, he said, though it could not do much, would make a beginning. It was the same in all the other relations

between the imperious young sultan of the family and his junior brothers and sisters. In his pyrotechnics for their amusement, his lectures to them on chemistry and natural philosophy, his dramatic recitations, he was always lord-paramount, and they were his thralls. Of De Quincey himself his opinion, frankly intimated from the first, was that he was physically contemptible, and mentally an idiot, though with some good moral qualities. Of the truth of this opinion, communicated so authoritatively, De Quincey says he had at first no doubt. It coincided with that idea of himself into which he had settled in those moping days of childish melancholy and reverie which his brother's arrival in Greenhay had disturbed; and he would have been only too glad if "that solid foundation of utter despicableness" to which he had learned to trust had been left unshaken. On the whole, he thinks, it was perhaps well that it was shaken. Left to himself with his other young brothers and sisters, he might have moped on till the taint of consumption had been developed in him; and his vehement elder brother's discipline had acted as a rough febrifuge.

Meanwhile the lessons with the Rev. Mr. S. H. had been sufficiently profitable. A conscientious man, though decidedly dull, he had grounded De Quincey well in Latin, and entered him in Greek; and there had been, moreover, a special excrescence from the tutorship, which, though irksome, had been beneficial. Mr. H. had a stock of three hundred and thirty sermons, each about sixteen minutes long, which, at the rate of two sermons every Sunday, served as spiritual nutriment for his congregation for a cycle of three years. The De Quincey family having to come in their carriage from Greenhay to church, it was only the forenoon sermon that the boy

heard; but of this he was expected regularly to give in a correct abstract in the course of the week. As the tutor did not allow notes to be taken, the exercise of memory was of lasting benefit. To these results of the tutorship add the results of the continued readings of the boy through the three years and a half, whether in connexion with the lessons or independently. As before, he dwells on individual passages that had impressed him. One passage that sank into him with a mystic sense of power was the phrase in the book of Daniel, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords." Another instance is even more remarkable. No reader of De Quincey but must have observed how frequent and important a word in his vocabulary is the word *Pariah*, meaning "social outcast," and what a hold had been taken of his imagination by the idea that an immense proportion of the men and women of the world, in all ages and all lands, had belonged to the class of *Pariahs*, the socially outcast for one reason or another, the despised, the unrespectable, the maltreated and downtrodden. Well, this idea, if his own dating is to be trusted, had been fixed in him irrevocably even in the present early period of his life. It was implanted in him first by the ineffable feeling of sublimity which he attached to those lines in the Epilogue to the second book of the Fables of Phædrus where that Latin fabulist, who had himself been a slave, exulted in the recollection that his predecessor, the Greek slave Æsop, had triumphed by his genius over the circumstances of his birth:—

> Æsopi ingenio statuam posuere Attici,
> Servumque collocarunt æterna in basi,
> Patere honoris scirent ut cunctis viam,
> Nec generi tribui sed virtuti gloriam.[1]

[1] De Quincey quotes only the first two lines of these four

But it was not from this passage alone, nor from mere literature, that he derived the idea in its full extension. It chanced that in the house of a certain reverend gentleman there were two twin girls, his daughters, who were deaf and scrofulous and reputed to be all but idiots, and whom therefore their mother, ashamed of them and disliking them, kept as much out of sight as possible, using them as menial drudges, and cruel to them otherwise, while the father, whatever he may have thought, did not interfere. The acute boy, prying about the house, and coming to know and pity the girls, had laid the case to heart. Were not these girls also *Pariahs*, and were there not other concealed varieties of *Pariahs* in Christian England?

It had been arranged by the guardians that the elder brother, who had shown a talent for drawing, should go into training for the profession of an artist by becoming pupil to the distinguished London landscape-painter and Royal Academician, De Loutherbourg. As the parting with his brother was to be a new starting-point in De Quincey's life, he remembered it well, the more by token of an incident of the very last morning of his brother's stay at Greenhay. It was a splendid June morning before breakfast, and all the six children were together in the grounds in front of the house, from Sultan William, now in his sixteenth year, down to the youngest. William was full of frolic, with the two girls laughing and dancing beside him, and the baby Henry near in the nurse's arms;

translating them "*A colossal statue did the Athenians raise to Æsop, and a poor pariah slave they planted upon an everlasting pedestal.*" The rest may run "*This they did in acknowledgment of the fact that the path of honour is open to all, and that glory belongs not to birth but to worth.*"

Richard, called familiarly "Pink," the next to De Quincey in age, was wheeling round on his heel at some distance; while De Quincey himself was standing close to the edge of a brook which bounded the grounds on that part where they were not protected from the lane by a railing and the gates. Suddenly there was a vast uproar in the lane, the noise of a shouting and running mob coming nearer and nearer, explained at last by the appearance of a great dog, much ahead of his pursuers, and panting and foaming at the mouth. The dog tried the gates, which were fortunately shut; then stood for a moment on the edge of the brook directly opposite to De Quincey, as if meditating a leap across; and then, amid the scare of the children, all except the intrepid William, who taunted and challenged the dog to come over, broke away again along the lane, followed by the long hullabaloo of men and boys, with guns, sticks, and pitchforks. It was a mad dog from a barracks, which had already that morning bitten two horses. He led his pursuers a chase of many miles before he was killed. One of the two horses he had bitten died afterwards of hydrophobia. What if he had leaped the brook?

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD AND CHANGES OF SCHOOL, WITH A TOUR IN IRELAND.

1796—1802.

Some time in 1796, De Quincey's mother having made up her mind to live at Bath, the establishment at Greenhay was broken up, and the house and grounds were sold. After being boarded for a while in Manchester, for continuation of the lessons under Mr. S. H., De Quincey followed his mother to Bath, and was entered at the Grammar School of the town, then presided over by a Mr. Morgan, an excellent classical scholar. He was then in his twelfth year, and was to have as one of his schoolfellows his brother Richard, already mentioned by his nickname of "Pink," about four years younger than himself, and a boy of exquisite beauty, and of a sweet gentleness that made him the most absolute contrast to the terrible William. Of that young hurricane and all his problematical capabilities De Quincey had seen the last. He died of typhus fever soon after he had become pupil to the Academician De Loutherbourg.

De Quincey remained at the Bath Grammar School about two years. From the first he had the reputation of a little prodigy in it, especially in Latin, and most especially for Latin verse-making. In this accomplishment he had such success that the head-master used to parade

his exercises publicly by way of reproach to the stiff Latinity of the boys of the first form, most of whom were five or six years older. On the other hand, he was at first somewhat backward in Greek,—on which account he had been placed under the second of the Bath School masters, rather than with the more advanced boys under Mr. Morgan himself. For some time there was a cabal among these advanced boys against the little interloper who was snatching from them the honours in Latin. On the whole, however, he was comfortable enough, and was rapidly attaining an unusual facility in speaking and writing Greek, when an accident led to his removal from the school. The most exact account of this accident is found in a boyish letter of his own, which chances to have survived. It is dated March 12, 1799, and was addressed to his sister Mary, then at a school in Bristol. "This day six weeks," are his words, "as we were up saying "[repeating our lessons], Mr. M. was called out, and so "forsooth little, or rather *big*, Mounseer Collins [one of "the undermasters] must jump into the desk. It hap- "pened that little Harman minor wanted his hat, which "hung up over Collins' head. Wilbraham asked for the "cane to reach it him, which Collins refused; and at the "same time, to give a little strength, I suppose, to his "refusal, and to enforce his authority as a master, en- "deavoured to hit him on the shoulder (as *he* says): but "how shall I relate the sequel? On poor Ego did it fall. "Say, Muse, what could inspire the cane with such a dire- "ful purpose? But not on my shoulder, on my *pate*, it "fell,—unhappy pate, worthy of a better fate!" The blow on the head, thus playfully described, seemed serious at the time. For some weeks De Quincey lay in his mother's house in Bath, attended by physicians and under

severe regimen. In the weeks of his gradual recovery his mother read to him steadily till he could resume reading for himself. Among the books thus read he mentions Sir William Jones's *Asiatic Researches*, Milner's *Church History*, Johnson's *Rambler*, Hoole's *Translations of Ariosto and Tasso*, with the notable addition of *Paradise Lost*, which had come to him, strangely enough, in Bentley's grotesque edition. At the same time he and his brother Pink had lessons in French.

Although the head-master and others interested in Bath Grammar School tried to get back their little prodigy, the mother would not consent. She sent him and his brother Pink to a private school at Winkfield, in Wiltshire, "of which the chief recommendation lay in the religious character of the master." Here he remained about a year, not thinking much of "old Spencer," the master, but a great favourite with the Miss Spencers, and with the thirty or forty boarders. Fifty years afterwards, two of his schoolfellows, clergymen of the Church of England, could remember him at Spencer's as a most obliging and companionable little fellow, willing to help any of the boys in their Latin or Greek, and a leader in their amusements, to which he would always give a literary turn. He divided the boys for their mimic fights into Greeks and Trojans, taking the part of Ulysses himself; and, in his capacity of contributor-in-chief to a journal carried on by the boys and the Miss Spencers, he replied in pungent English verses to a challenge by the boys of a neighbouring school. It was remembered also that, when his mother came to visit the school, and the boys talked of her as a friend of Hannah More, he would tell them with pride that his mother was quite as clever as Hannah.

Hardly more than a year had been spent at Winkfield

when the connexion with that school was brought to an end by an invitation to De Quincey of a kind which his mother did not see fit to refuse. During the time of the convalescence at Bath, in the spring of 1799, an acquaintance had sprung up between De Quincey and young Lord Westport, the only child of John-Denis, third Earl of Altamont of the Irish peerage, afterwards Marquis of Sligo. The boy, whom De Quincey represents as almost exactly of his own age, but whom the peerage books represent as considerably younger, had been then in the neighbourhood of Bath, with his tutor, Mr. Grace. He and his tutor had been asked to Mrs. De Quincey's house; and now, after more than a year, during which his young lordship had been at Eton, there came the invitation we speak of. It was an invitation to join Lord Westport at Eton and accompany him in a long holiday on his father's estates in county Mayo in the West of Ireland. Arrangements having been duly made, De Quincey did set out for Eton in the summer of 1800, to begin a ramble and round of visits in England and Ireland, which extended over four or five months.

Eton itself was a good beginning. That classic town, as all the world ought to know, is really part and parcel of Windsor, within whose royal precincts is Frogmore, a seat of royalty subsidiary to Windsor Castle. Now, as George III. and his Queen, with the princesses, were at Frogmore in the summer of 1800, and as Lord Westport not only had the run of Frogmore grounds, but was specially known to the royal family, as the son and heir-apparent of the Earl of Altamont, and as grandson by his mother of the lately deceased Earl Howe, the famous Admiral, what was to prevent De Quincey, in such good company, from having an interview with his

Majesty himself? This, he tells us, actually occurred. The King, recognizing Lord Westport in one of the Frogmore walks, stopped him and talked with him a little, and then, turning to his companion, whose name he had somehow already heard, asked whether he too was at Eton, and whether his father was alive, and whether his mother thought of sending him to Eton,—a capital school, none better!—and whether his family was of French Huguenot descent. To all which De Quincey returned, he says, brief and modest answers, only throwing a little energy into his repudiation of any recent French origin, and informing his Majesty that the English De Quinceys were as old as the Conquest, and were mentioned in the very earliest of English books, Robert of Gloucester's *Metrical Chronicle*. "I know, I know," said the King with a smile, as if he remembered such a book in his library, but did not like to commit himself on the subject with such a knowing little shrimp; and the interview ended, the two boys stepping backward a few paces and bowing profoundly, while his Majesty moved away. This, however, was not De Quincey's last sight of the King. He had the honour of being invited, with Lord Westport, to one or two of the *fêtes* which the Queen was then giving at Frogmore, and did attend one of them,—in a travelling dress, as his mother heard with horror, till he explained to her in a letter that his travelling-dress was a very good one, "much better than what Lord Westport had on," and that in such a crush it did not matter. The stay at Eton was broken by a run to London. It was De Quincey's first sight of the great metropolis, and he is punctual in dating it as in the month of May.

From Eton, where De Quincey, as he informed his mother

very penitentially, could not avoid going once to a play in Windsor Theatre to oblige Lord Westport, the two lads, with the tutor, began their journey for Ireland on the 18th of July. Travelling through North Wales, they reached Holyhead, where the tutor was to leave them. At that place the tutor, who had taken mysterious offence at something or other, and apparently begun to have doubts about De Quincey, ceased to speak with either of the lads, but duly saw them aboard the packet that was to take them to Dublin. The passage of thirty hours, the arrival in Dublin, the first impressions of that city, and the various incidents and pleasures of the fortnight or so passed there, are described at considerable length in the subsequent autobiographic record. It was an unusually interesting time in the History of Ireland, for it was the time of the completion in the Irish Parliament of the Bill for the Union of Ireland with Great Britain. Introduced to his friend's father, the Earl of Altamont, "a very fat man, and so lame that he is obliged to have two servants to support him whenever he stirs," De Quincey had access to all the sights and demonstrations of the crisis. He was present at the splendid ceremony of the installation of the Knights of St. Patrick; and he was present in the last sittings of the Irish House of Peers, when the Union Act was passed. He saw the Lord Lieutenant Cornwallis, Lord and Lady Castlereagh, and other great public persons; and he saw the surgings in the streets of excited Irish mobs. From such personal reminiscences of his Dublin visit he deviates into a general essay on the social and political state of Ireland at the time, with particular accounts of the two recent Irish Rebellions, &c.; and it is when we are extricated from these that we find him at last, about the 20th

of August, at Lord Altamont's seat of Westport in Connaught. There, in a big house, with but a slovenly collection of books in it, but with wild Irish scenery round about for excursions, wild Irish horses to ride, and wilder Irish grooms to study, he spent some weeks pleasantly enough, coaching Lord Westport at odd moments, it would seem, in Greek and Latin.

One starry experience dwelt with him all the while. In that part of his journey from Dublin to Connaught which had been performed on the Grand Canal, leading from Dublin to Tullamore, there had been among his fellow-passengers in the canal-boat the widowed Countess of Errol, in deep mourning, and her sister Miss Blake. Both ladies were of Irish birth, and both were young, beautiful, and accomplished. Introduced by Lord Westport, De Quincey was for a time in Elysium. Mentioning the rencontre in a letter to his mother at the time, all that he says is that "in the canal-boat was a Miss Blake, a sister of the present Countess Dowager of Errol," and that they "formed an acquaintance and talked about the English poets for the whole afternoon." It is in the Autobiography that we learn the whole truth. Miss Blake, with her soft eyes and soft Irish voice, her Irish gaiety and affluence in talk, had impressed him as he had never been impressed before. "From this day," he says, "I was an altered creature, never again relapsing into the careless irreflective mind of childhood."

Returning from Ireland to England in October 1800, the two friends parted at Birmingham; and one observes it as rather curious that Lord Westport is hardly heard of again in De Quincey's history, whether under the title of Earl of Altamont, which he could assume by

courtesy before the year closed, in consequence of his father's promotion to the Marquisate of Sligo, or under that of Marquis of Sligo, which was his own from 1809 to 1845. Meanwhile we are not quite done with De Quincey's ramble. From Birmingham, as instructed by a letter from his mother, he went to Laxton in Northamptonshire, where his elder sister already was. It was the seat of Lord and Lady Carbery, the latter of whom, in her unmarried condition as Miss Watson, a wealthy heiress, had long been an intimate young friend of his mother's. A Lord and Lady Massey were also staying at Laxton, and Lord Carbery himself arrived from Ireland; and, as there was a fine library in the house, with all the appurtenances of luxurious culture, a month or two of rest in such English seclusion were very acceptable after so much rough Irish locomotion. Lady Carbery, a handsome woman of about six and twenty, was abundantly kind to the boy, both for his mother's sake and his own. She arranged that he should have daily lessons in riding, to which he submitted, with no very effective result; she called him her "Admirable Crichton," and taxed all his resources of acquired knowledge; and in one department she became his grateful pupil. Having imbibed the sentiments of the Evangelical School of Religion, with Hannah More and Mrs. De Quincey for her exemplars, but having a strong and inquiring intellect, she had begun a systematic study of Theology, and had come to be vexed by the question whether the authorized English version of the Bible could be relied on as presenting the exact doctrinal truth on all points. Her young adviser having assured her that on some points it could not, she felt as if her salvation might depend on her having a Greek New Testament and a Parkhurst's

Greek Lexicon beside her; and De Quincey, having encouraged the idea, had the pleasure of setting her agoing in her Greek studies. Altogether he was very happy at Laxton, and there can hardly be a pleasanter picture than that of the high-minded young matron of the mansion, a kind of English variety of Goethe's "Fair Saint," looking after her youthful guest, on the one hand, as a feeble boy that needed superintendence, and on the other hand finding instruction for hours in listening to his suggestive, eloquent, and prematurely learned talk.

The effects upon De Quincey's mind of his long ramble, with the varied glimpses it had given him of the actual world, and especially of an aristocratic section of it, had been, he says, something extraordinary. The rate of his intellectual expansion, he says, was no longer like the movement of the hour hand of a watch, whose advance, though certain, is matter of inference, but was like the visible pace of the seconds' hand. One may question whether a matter-of-fact person would not rather have described the effects of his tour and its incidents as perturbing and unsettling.

Experience seems to have decided that, in the majority of cases, the wisest plan for parents and guardians in the education of a boy is to find out the best established routine of public schooling for boys in his circumstances, and to keep to that inflexibly through all its stages for the usual period. This seems to have been De Quincey's own belief. Of the two schools he had been at he greatly preferred Bath Grammar School; it had been against his will that he had been removed from it; and in his letters to his mother from Ireland he had argued earnestly for a return to that school, if to any, till he should be thought of age for the University. In any

case, he objected to being sent to another private school, like that at Winkfield. "I was at the head of the "school the whole time I was there. No one but myself "could make verses and all those kinds of things; but "then I had no one to contend with, nor anything higher "to aspire to. The consequence was that my powers en- "tirely flagged; my mind became dormant in comparison "with what it was at the Bath Grammar School." These remonstrances were so far attended to that, when he left Lady Carbery's at Laxton, the arrangement of his mother and guardians was that he should not be sent again to any private school, but should go for three years to the Grammar School of his native town of Manchester. Their chief reason was a pecuniary one. Among the endowments of Manchester Grammar School were certain exhibitions by which boys who had been regularly at the school for three full years could be sent to Brasenose College, Oxford, with 40*l.* or 50*l.* a year guaranteed them for seven years. With 50*l.* a year added to his patrimonial inheritance of 150*l.*, De Quincey would be able, in his nineteenth year, to go to Oxford in proper gentlemanly style, with an annual 200*l.* for his expenses.

With sighs and forebodings, De Quincey did go to Manchester Grammar School, some time late in 1800, for his three years of drudgery. His account of the school, and of the head master, Mr. Lawson, in whose house he was boarded, is far from unfriendly on the whole. Mr. Lawson, though in his declining years, and not quite at ease with his own head boys in their higher Greek readings, was kind, conscientious, and exemplary; the school was an ancient and rich one, with historical traditions and good appliances and accommodations; the discipline was maintained entirely by moral means, which was rather

rare at that time; and the boarders, with whom De Quincey had principally to associate, were mostly Lancashire youths of good manners and principles, with a collective amount of knowledge and ability among them, especially in English literature, which rather surprised the new comer at first. He had a pleasant little room at the top of the house, and books at will by a subscription to the Manchester library. But there were objections. He does not positively include among these the fact that many of the day-boys in the school were sons of artisans, some of them even having "sisters that were menial servants;" but he mentions the fact; and he admits generally that the whole atmosphere of Manchester, where he could not stir out of doors without being "nosed by a factory, a cotton-bag, a cotton-dealer, or something else allied to that detestable commerce," had become insufferably uncongenial. It was, however, the monotony of the school life itself that put him out of spirits,—the sight day after day of the same bare white-washed walls, the dull repetition from day to day of petty linguistic tasks that had no stimulus for him now, and were far beneath his capacity. Above all, the total deprivation of physical exercise inflicted on Mr. Lawson's boarders by his absurd system of regulating their hours from morning to evening, with "callings-over" even in the intervals for meals and rest, had a ruinous effect on De Quincey's health. For some time he had been enabled to bear up against the complicated miseries by accidental compensations. Lady Carbery had been in Manchester for some months, with a portion of her household, just after his entry into the new school; a venerable old clergyman of the town, of Swedenborgian views, and author of various Swedenborgian tracts, had taken a fancy for the extraordinary lad and his con-

versation, and liked him to call; and, in one or two runs to Liverpool, an acquaintance had been struck up with the club of *literati* of which that town could then boast, and of which Roscoe, and Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns, were the chiefs. But, after a year and a half at the school, the prospect of another year and a half became intolerable. In a letter to his mother, still extant, he pleads most pitifully for his immediate removal. He enumerates, and emphasises in italic words, his five individual causes of complaint, and then rolls them all in characteristic fashion into one collective sixth. How could a person be happy, he asks, or even simply easy, "in a "situation which deprives him of *health*, of *society*, of "*amusement*, of *liberty*, of *congeniality of pursuits*, and "which, to complete the precious picture, admits of no "*variety?*" Even this pitiful pleading was of no avail, and De Quincey was driven to a desperate resolution. He resolved to run away. After brooding over the resolution for some time, and procuring the necessary funds from Lady Carbery, who, knowing nothing of her young friend's purpose, sent him 10*l.* in answer to his application by letter for 5*l.*, he carried it into effect by slipping out of Mr. Lawson's house early one morning in July 1802. He had an English poet in one pocket, and an odd volume of Euripides in the other. He was then close on seventeen years of age.

CHAPTER III.

VAGRANCY IN NORTH WALES AND IN LONDON.

1802—1803.

De Quincey's first intention, when he had made up his mind to run away from Manchester School, was to wander towards the district of the English Lakes. The magnet that attracted him thither was Wordsworth, some of whose poems he had recently read. O to be in the neighbourhood of that man, to see the house in which he dwelt, the scenes amid which he moved; perhaps to catch a glimpse of himself! Alive, however, to the absurdity of any such approach to Wordsworth in the character of a runaway schoolboy, and also to the duty of some communication first of all with his mother, he had determined to run the risks involved in the latter course. As his mother had by this time got tired of Bath, and transferred herself to a house in Chester, called the Priory, the communication was not difficult. Two days of walking carried him over the forty miles that separated Manchester from Chester; and, after some hovering about the house, of which he gives a whimsical account, the meeting took place. His mother, with her notions and habits of decorum, looked upon the occurrence, he says, "much as she would have done upon the opening of the seventh seal in the Revelations;" but it chanced that another relative was at hand who took a lighter view of the affair. This

was his uncle, Colonel Thomas Penson, his mother's only surviving brother, home from India on a three-years' furlough, and quartered for the time, with his horses and Bengalee servants, at the Priory. Colonel Penson, a kindly man of the world, saw nothing unnatural in the desire of a youth to elope from the tedium of school; and, by his advice, it was arranged that De Quincey, if he did not choose to remain at the Priory, should have a guinea a week allowed him for a while, with liberty to wander about and enjoy himself on that basis.

From July to November 1802 we see him wandering about North Wales, from town to town, from village to village, from country-inn to country-inn, having various little adventures and picking up random new acquaintances by the way, all the while making his guinea a week go as far as it could, and hitting on ingenious devices for that end. The chief was that of alternating, according to whim and weather, between the more expensive style of living, at the rate of about half-a-guinea a day, necessary if he went to the better inns, and the incredibly cheap living then possible in Wales if one lodged in the cottages of the hospitable and unsophisticated Welsh peasantry, or snatched a meal somewhere in a long walk and bivouacked through the night among ferns and furze. It was, he says, a most pleasant existence, an existence of breezy freedom, with perpetual delight from the mountain scenery, the sylvan nooks, the rushing brooks, the picturesque evening groups of the villagers gathered round their harpers. But the sting of some unsatisfied craving, the fatal longing in his nature to break away from the customary and respectable and to dare the forbidden and indefinite, carried him suddenly out of those Welsh solitudes. He would give up his guinea a week, cut that

remaining bond between him and his mother and guardians, and bury himself in the world of London. There he would find books and society; there he would find he knew not what; there he would find at least,—so he had heard,—Jew money-lenders, who might be willing to advance him 200*l.* on his expectations.

It was late in November 1802 when, having borrowed twelve guineas from two lawyer friends in Oswestry, De Quincey, after eight-and-twenty hours on the coach from Shrewsbury, was deposited in the streets of London. Here what months he passed, what months of wild, haggard, Bohemian roaming and staggering from worse to worse! He had lost no time in applying to a Jew money-lender, named Dell; but Dell was never himself to be seen in such cases, and the negotiation had to be with Dell's devil or legal factotum. This was a low attorney, called Brunell, who had for his place of business a house in Greek Street, Soho, at the corner of Soho Square, with precautionary chains on the doors, and loopholes through which those who knocked could be surveyed before they were admitted. As we read the description of this house in Greek Street, with all its rooms unoccupied and unfurnished, save Mr. Brunell's own sanctum, and some den for his athletic clerk, Pyment, and of Mr. Brunell's arrivals in it every morning from no one knew where, and his disappearances in the evening, when his sanctum was carefully locked and the empty house was left in the sole keeping of a poor little wretch of a girl, ten years of age, who slept on straw as near as she could to the street-door, we feel as if we were in the midst of a novel by Dickens. With Brunell himself De Quincey became very familiar by frequent visits, and found him, disreputable though he was, a very kindly person, and with a wonderful passion

for literature and knowledge, the survival from some happier time when he had hopes of another career than that of a devil for money-lenders. But Brunell could do nothing himself in the matter of the advance, for there was the invisible Dell in the background. The policy of Dell, in such cases, was that of delay,—delay for the necessary investigations, for whetting the appetite of the applicant, and for exacting charges for papers, stamps, and one knows not what. Thus the lad, though living as parsimoniously as he could in lodgings, was brought to his last guinea, and it was an act of charity when Brunell consented to let him use the house in Greek Street as his sleeping asylum at nights. There, sharing a floor in the void tenement with the little wretch of a servant-girl, to whom his advent was a godsend, as a deliverance from her terrors of loneliness, he did sleep, night after night, for some indefinite period, glad to pick up stray crusts in the morning from Brunell's breakfast-table. But, his presence in the house during the day being undesirable, he had to be off every morning, to "sit in the parks or elsewhere," or prowl about the streets as he chose. And what streets he thus came to know, and what eternal circuits among the same streets! Regent Street then was not; and his main range was the great thoroughfare of Oxford Street, with the streets to the north of it as far as the New Road, and the maze of streets on the other or southern side as far as the line of Coventry Street and Piccadilly. Within those bounds he was a peripatetic through days of which he kept no reckoning, and often late at nights, till the watchmen began to recognise his figure, and would sometimes rouse him roughly as he sat on door-steps. As was natural, he became acquainted with other peripatetics, the "street-walkers" in another sense. With this class

of unfortunates, and with not a few individuals among them, he tells us, his relations were intimate enough, though all in perfect innocence. One in chief he could never forget. Oh! that Ann of Oxford Street, the poor girl of sixteen, whose simple and sad history he had come to know, whose goodness of heart shone out even in her degradation, with whom it had become his daily habit to go about by appointment, and who had once saved his life, when he had fainted from exhaustion, by running for wine and stimulants and fetching them for him out of her own scanty money!

A favourable impression had been at last produced on Dell by proofs of De Quincey's former intimacy with Lord Altamont and the Marquis of Sligo. If Mr. De Quincey could fortify his own mere personal security by getting Lord Altamont to be his co-security, Mr. Dell would not mind lending him 200*l.* or even 300*l.* A casual encounter with an old family friend in Albemarle Street having at the same time provided De Quincey with a little ready cash, he bade Ann farewell for a day or two, and took the coach for Eton to broach the matter to Lord Altamont. Unfortunately his lordship had just left Eton for Cambridge; and all that De Quincey could effect was a provisional arrangement with another young nobleman at Eton, which he thought might answer Mr. Dell's purpose. When he returned to London, Ann was gone! He never saw her or heard of her more. All his life afterwards that girl was to be in his thoughts. Ah! poor Ann of Oxford Street, what had become of her? Had she gone into some ruffianly keeping and might she be still alive; or had that cough which he had observed in her done its merciful work, and was her young frame at rest, though but in a pauper's grave, in some dank corner of a London churchyard?

Is all this true, or was De Quincey romancing? He was himself aware that there might be some such suspicion; and, when, immediately after the first publication of his *Confessions*, some of his critics were taking them for ingenious fiction, he was very serious in his efforts to undeceive them. He had not told the *whole* truth about his London vagrancy, he said, because that was impossible, but he had told nothing but the truth. Such an assurance ought itself to count for something; but there is more. In early private letters of De Quincey, published by Mr. Page, we have the means of checking portions of his subsequent autobiographical writings; and, as in all cases where this check can be applied the correspondence between the original memorials and the later narrative is strikingly exact, a slight occasional haziness of date excepted, the rest of the narrative is entitled to the benefit of the fact. In short, though there may be a little mingling of the *Dichtung* with the *Wahrheit*, De Quincey's account of his days of London wretchedness may be accepted as authentic. And why not? True, it could only have been a most odd, unpractical, little creature that could have got himself into such conditions, or that, once in them, could not have extricated himself. But are there not such queer young eccentrics in the world even now, creatures of cleverness touched with some craze or peculiarity which makes them a puzzle to their friends, and which, while incapacitating them for the most obvious acts of reasonableness natural to ordinary people, leads them sometimes to acts at which ordinary people stare? That eccentricity of De Quincey which was to be a life-long characteristic, and even that form of eccentricity which was to be peculiarly his in after-life,—a constant shy timorousness, a perpetual looking backward over his shoulder for some terrible danger that he had

escaped, but that was still dogging him,—seems to have been first developed in those days of his strange London experiences in his eighteenth year. When Carlyle knew him long afterwards, and when his small stature, boyish face, gentle demeanour, and beautiful silvery talk, were the most obvious things about him to first observation, something more, Carlyle thought, was physiognomically discernible. "*Eccovi!* look at him: this child has been in Hell."

The proposed substitute for Lord Altamont's guarantee of co-security not being satisfactory to Mr. Dell, De Quincey was at the extreme of despair, when, by some unexplained concatenation of circumstances, he was discovered and reclaimed by his friends. He went back to Chester, to reside for some time with his mother in the Priory. His Indian uncle was still there, and it was some tetchy but well-intentioned remark of this good gentleman in a moment of argument that induced De Quincey to close with a shabby offer made by his guardians, to the effect that he might go to the University if he liked, but should not have a farthing more than 100*l.* a year. On this allowance, in the autumn of 1803, as nearly as the date can be guessed, he went to Worcester College, Oxford.

CHAPTER IV.

MAINLY AT OXFORD, WITH VISITS TO LONDON AND THE LAKES.

1803—1809.

Of De Quincey's Oxford life very little is known. There is a casual hint from himself that he had made a mistake in his choice of a college. Had he gone to Brasenose, as would have happened if he had remained for the necessary time at Manchester Grammar School, he would have had a smooth and properly arranged introduction to the academic life, whereas in Worcester College he was an isolated stranger, left to shift for himself. All that the head of the college, Dr. Cotton, could afterwards remember of him was summed up in a few sentences. "During the "period of his residence," says Dr. Cotton, "he was "generally known as a quiet and studious man. He did "not frequent wine parties, though he did not abstain "from wine; and he devoted himself principally to the "society of a German, named Schwartzburg, who is said "to have taught him Hebrew. He was remarkable even "in those days for his rare conversational powers, and for "his extraordinary stock of information upon every subject "that was started." Altogether, though he had some acquaintances in different colleges, and was known among them as a very uncommon person, he seems rather to

have crept through the University quietly than to have made any stir in it, keeping much by himself, and reading prodigiously in lines of his own. This recluseness was not owing to the extreme necessity of economy which his guardians had tried to impose upon him when they fixed his allowance at only 100*l.* a year. That had been evaded, he tells us, by the relenting of his Jewish friend in London, who did at last advance him the sum for which there had been so much negotiation. He could thus afford himself all that was needed to make Oxford studentship fairly comfortable, including books, a run to London now and then, and a visit, in vacation-time, to friends in Liverpool or elsewhere.

The lessons from the German Schwartzburg were of some consequence. They were not in Hebrew merely. Though he had received some general notions of German Literature, and especially some tempting information about Jean Paul Richter, Hippel, Hamann, and other little-known German writers, from an accomplished young German, named De Haren, with whom he had formed a friendship in his Welsh wanderings, it was at Oxford, and under Schwartzburg, that he first set himself seriously to the study of German. The German Philosophy, as well as the German Literature, attracted him thenceforward.

Of even greater importance was the systematic attention he now began to bestow on English Literature. Though from his childhood his sensibilities had been powerfully affected by "the greatness of our own literature," and though his readings in English poets and prose-writers had been extensive and varied, it was at Oxford that he first felt the necessity of organizing his knowledge of English Literature, and regarding it no longer as a mere splendid

phenomenon or sky of so many hundreds of scattered stars of different degrees of brilliancy, but as a vast and vital whole that could be grasped in a History. Thenceforward, while Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, and others of his favourites among the older writers, were dearer and more distinct to him than ever individually, he could contemplate that great flow of the national thought through successive centuries, which, though it seemed to eddy round those individualities as so many independent and inserted marvels, had really caused them and stationed them where they were, and which, after its farther, and in his eyes less interesting, course through the eighteenth century, was now again becoming glorious in Wordsworth and his disciples. It was on this last portion of the long history of English Literature, the portion contemporary with himself, that De Quincey fastened his regard with the enthusiasm of a personal concern. He had by this time put himself in correspondence with Wordsworth, expressing his admiration and indebtedness, and had received at least two letters of reply, intimating that the poet was not indifferent to the recognition of such a hopeful young admirer, and would be glad to see him at a convenient opportunity. More recently, he had been making inquiries after Coleridge, whom he had known first by his *Ancient Mariner*, published with Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, but to whom he was now drawn also by interest in his prose-writings. As De Quincey had already concluded with himself that it would never be in the element of verse that his own genius could accomplish anything considerable in literature, if he should ever accomplish anything at all, the fact that Coleridge was a prose writer and philosopher, as well as a poet, seems to have whetted

the desire for an immediate meeting with him, if only in preparation for the more formidable and less accessible Wordsworth. He was therefore much disappointed at finding, in 1805, that Coleridge had left the Lakes, and had gone to Malta as Secretary to Sir Alexander Ball, the Governor of that island.

One other fact of De Quincey's days of Oxford studentship is expressly recorded by himself. It was then that he first began to take opium. His first experience of the drug was on a dull rainy Sunday in the spring or autumn of 1804, when, being on one of his visits to London, and having suffered for a week or two from neuralgia, he took the advice of a friend and purchased a phial of the tincture of opium at a druggist's shop in Oxford Street, near "the stately Pantheon." The effect, when he took the first dose in his lodgings, was divine; and from that moment De Quincey was an experimenter in opium,—never without a supply of the drug beside him in one or other of its forms, whether in the solid cakes or sticks of the dried substance, as imported from Turkey, Egypt, Persia, or India, or in the prepared red-brown liquid known as laudanum. Nay more, from that moment he was the apologist for opium, skilled, or fancying himself skilled, in all its effects, and distinguishing its negative effects in the mere relief of pain from its positive effects as an intellectual stimulant and exhilarant. He suggests, indeed, that, in continuing the use of the drug after its first service to him in an attack of neuralgia, he had hit by blind instinct on the specific for the pulmonary consumption to which he was liable by inheritance from his father. The reports of medical authorities, from an investigation of all the evidence, are rather to the effect that the constitutional disease from which he suffered was a

slow or intermittent ulceration of the stomach, brought on perhaps by bad and insufficient food during his time of vagrancy in Wales and London, and that his perseverance in the use of opium was due originally to his accidental experience of its effects in allaying those "gnawing pains in the stomach" of which, from that time of his vagrancy, he complained always or periodically. Enough of a disagreeable subject. What concerns us at present is that De Quincey avers most solemnly that, though he took opium at Oxford from 1804 onwards, it was still in such moderation that he could have broken off the habit. He was not yet, nor for some years to come, a slave to opium but confined himself to a carefully præcalculated opium-debauch, as he calls it, about once in three weeks. The probability is that the indulgence added to his queerness among the Oxonians, his liking for solitary reverie, and his carelessness of academic routine and distinction.

De Quincey, it seems, did go up for his written examination for the degree of B.A. The fact is attested by one of his old schoolfellows at Winkfield, who had gone to Lincoln College while De Quincey was in residence in Worcester College. Dr. Goodenough of Christ Church, says this authority, was wonderfully struck with De Quincey's performance, and told the Worcester College people that they had sent up the cleverest man he had ever encountered, and that, if he did as well in his *vivâ voce* as he had done on paper, he would carry all before him. But De Quincey, in a fit of shyness, or having taken some offence, never presented himself for his *vivâ voce*, remained without his degree, and indeed disappeared from Oxford for some time. The date is not given, but it seems to have been in 1807. His name remained on the books of his college till 1810; but, as we have his own distinct

statement that his time of residence was from 1803 to 1808, we have to suppose only a year of effective connexion with the University after 1807, and that broken by absences. He liked to be in London, where he now counted Charles Lamb in the number of his acquaintances, and where he delighted in going to the Opera to hear Grassini sing, and in rambling among the markets on Saturday nights; and he had entered himself, or was about to enter himself, as a member of the Middle Temple, with a view to eating his terms for the Bar. His mother meanwhile having shifted her domicile from Chester to a house and estate called Westhay, in Somersetshire, about twelve miles from Bristol, which had been purchased for her by her Indian brother at a cost of 12,000*l*., there were visits also to that part of the West of England, with renewed confabulations with Hannah More and her set. What is of especial importance in De Quincey's biography, however, at this time of the close of his residence at Oxford, is that he is found then indubitably in possession of a good deal of money. How this had come about we are not informed; but, as he had attained his majority in 1806, we are to fancy either that he had then been put at comparative ease by becoming master of his own funds, or that there had been some new and enlarged transaction with the Jews, converting the whole futurity of those funds into a present capital. As De Quincey speaks of his transactions with the Jews as pretty continuous, or as repeated from time to time, in his earlier life, the latter supposition is likely enough.

The improvement of De Quincey's pecuniary circumstances in and from the year 1807 connects itself more particularly with one interesting absence of his from Oxford in the latter half of that year. Having gone into Somerset-

shire in the course of the summer, and having heard that Coleridge had returned from abroad, and was then quartered among friends at Nether Stowey in that county, he went in search of the great man. He did not find him at Nether Stowey, but came upon him in the town of Bridgewater, where he was staying, with his wife, and his three young children, Hartley, Derwent, and Sara, in the house of a certain family of Chubbs, well-to-do descendants of Chubb the Deist. It was a memorable meeting. The "noticeable man with large grey eyes," now not more than thirty-five years of age, but, as De Quincey observed, with flabby and unhealthy white cheeks and confused and abstracted gait, received his young visitor very courteously, and had several conversations with him, by himself and in company. Though the elder opium-eater and the younger opium-eater were thus together, no confidences were exchanged on that subject, save that once, when laudanum was casually mentioned by De Quincey, it was with an emphasis of horror that Coleridge warned him to have nothing to do with that drug. The talk, or rather Coleridge's monologue, was on all things and sundry, and De Quincey was amazed, even beyond expectation, by its range and gorgeousness. His veneration for Coleridge became a kind of filial affection ; and, when, a few weeks after, Coleridge went with his family to Bristol and their acquaintance was renewed there, it was with delight that De Quincey found he could do the sage a slight piece of service. Mrs. Coleridge and the children were bound for the Lakes, to be domiciled, as before, with Southey at Greta Hall, Keswick; but, as Coleridge was arranging for a course of lectures on Poetry and the Fine Arts, to be delivered at the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street, London, he could not accompany them. De Quincey offered to be

their escort; and in October 1807 the party set out from Bristol by post-chaise. Travelling by stages, and with some little stay at Liverpool, they reached the Lake Country by a route which required them to take Wordsworth's cottage at Grasmere as their resting-place before going on to Southey's at Keswick. Twice had De Quincey been on the verge of this poetic paradise before, but both times he had retreated with a nervous shrinking at the last moment from the idea of presenting himself to Wordsworth. Now, however, in his character of convoy to Mrs. Coleridge, rather than in that of Wordsworth's occasional correspondent in past years, he did behold the epoch-making man, received a grasp of welcome from his hand at his own door, and became his temporary guest. For two days he was in the cottage, along with Mrs. Coleridge and her children, happy in the society of Wordsworth, his wife, and his sister Dorothy, and making his observations of the three; and on the third day there began that excursion of all the seniors of the party over the hills in a cart, which, while it deposited Mrs. Coleridge at her destination in Southey's house, gave De Quincey his first introduction also to that other famous Lakist. All this was in November 1807; before the end of which month De Quincey was back in Bristol, to hear of the completion of another piece of kindness he had been meditating for Coleridge. The profound dejection of Coleridge, the state of "cheerless despondency" into which he had fallen, and out of which his splendid talks were evidently but leaps and refuges of despair, had struck his young friend; and, having ascertained by inquiries that the main immediate cause was hopeless distress in money-matters, De Quincey had been in private communication with Cottle, the Bristol bookseller, on the subject.

He wanted to give Coleridge 500*l.*, a sum which all Cottle's representations, with questions whether he was serious, whether he could afford it, whether he was of age, &c., could not persuade him to reduce below 300*l.* That sum Coleridge did accept, having been told nothing more by Cottle at the time than that "a young man of fortune who admired his talents" wanted to make him a present. Coleridge's formal receipt for the money, which the bookseller thought it right to take for his own exoneration, is dated November 12, 1807.

Though De Quincey includes the year 1808 in the time of his Oxford residence, the records show him to have been much in London through parts of that year. Coleridge was one of his attractions. He heard some of the sage's lectures at the Royal Institution, and regretted that, from Coleridge's own carelessness in preparation and the wretched state of his health, they were so nearly a breakdown; he saw much of Coleridge in his uncomfortable temporary chambers in the office of the *Courier* newspaper in the Strand; and in his calls on Coleridge at these chambers he met Sir Humphry Davy, Godwin, and other new faces. Later in the year he is found still, or again, in London, in lodgings in Titchfield Street and Northumberland Street, Marylebone, eating his terms, one has to suppose, and seeing Lamb and Hazlitt, and sauntering at nights among the markets, and not failing at the opera for many nights in succession. In November of the same year he paid a second visit to Wordsworth at the Lakes; and he remained there till February 1809, when he returned to London. Wordsworth, at the time of this second visit of De Quincey, had been busy with that series of political letters in the *Courier* newspaper which he converted into more complete form in his pamphlet,

published May 1809, *Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, as affected by the Convention of Cintra.* It was De Quincey, after his return to London, who saw this pamphlet through the press, adding an appendix of notes, which Wordsworth described as "done in a masterly manner." The service was gratefully acknowledged also by Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy. A letter of hers is extant in which she thanks De Quincey warmly for having saved her brother so much anxiety, says he had been a treasure to them both, and hopes that he may soon be at Grasmere to refresh himself after the troubles of his task.

Dorothy Wordsworth's hope in this letter points to an arrangement of some importance that had been come to between De Quincey and the Wordsworths. This was that De Quincey should leave London, Oxford, and all his other troublesome entanglements in the south, and should come to reside permanently at the Lakes, as the tenant of the very cottage in which Wordsworth had lived from 1799 to 1807, but which he had recently quitted for the somewhat larger house, called Allan Bank, about a mile distant. Through the latter months of 1809 the talk among the inhabitants of the quiet valley of Grasmere was of the young gentleman who was coming to live among them in Mr. Wordsworth's old cottage, and of Miss Wordsworth's careful activity in ordering carpets and other furnishings, and getting the cottage ready for his arrival.

CHAPTER V.

BACHELOR LIFE AT THE LAKES.

1809—1816

In November 1809, De Quincey, at the age of twenty-four, took possession of his pretty cottage at Townend, Grasmere, and became one of the so-called Lakists. For seven and twenty years this cottage was to be in his tenancy, and for more than twenty of these it was to be his headquarters and nominal home, the place where he resided constantly when he was at rest, or to which he always returned from any of his frequent divagations.

Strange that a district of England which had been sleeping unknown in its native beauties and grandeurs from time immemorial, over whose mountains the snow had come and gone silently for a thousand winters, and whose valleys had laughed again in equal privacy into shower and sunshine through the thousand alternating summers, should have been suddenly evoked into celebrity by the genius of one man. But so it had happened. Wordsworth was making the Lake District, and the call had gone forth to come and behold it. Ho! all ye that are tourists and in quest of the picturesque, try this district in the proper season; all ye that have made a little money, and desire to settle somewhere, in peace and

meditative comfort, for the rest of your lives, examine these valleys and the skirts of these lakes for the suitable spots; all ye that are sons of the muses in the higher sense, not tied by hard necessity to the vicinity of a printing-press, in London, or Edinburgh, or any other city, but at liberty to select an abode where you may possess your souls in quiet and combine high thinking with plain living,—Mr. Wordsworth uses and recommends no beverages stronger than milk or tea; but stronger may be imported if indispensable, and there are inns on the roads,—come and have cottages here, and spend hours every day in the open air, communing with Nature herself, as she is to be found, pure and unsophisticated, in Cumberland and Westmoreland scenery! By the year 1809 the response had been considerable. Tourists had been becoming numerous enough to suggest to Wordsworth the rudiments of what afterwards took form as his *Guide to the Lakes;* new residents from among the class of retired business-men were appearing by degrees; and, though fewer sons of the muses were in circumstances to accept the invitation than might have liked to do so, a sprinkling of such was to be counted.

Wordsworth himself, now in his fortieth year, and settled at Grasmere since 1799, had just, as we have seen, migrated from his previous cottage to Allan Bank, only a mile distant, which was to be his residence till the spring of 1811, when he transferred himself to Grasmere Parsonage, there to remain till 1813, when he removed to his final and most famous residence of Rydal Mount. Southey, the industrious Southey, four years younger than Wordsworth, had been established for some years at Greta Hall, Keswick, in the Cumberland portion of the Lake District, and at least thirteen miles from Wordsworth. It was a

convenient distance between two men whose mutual respect obliged them to occasional intercourse, but whose styles of genius and habits of literary work were so different as to cause some degree of mutual repulsion. Coleridge, Southey's brother-in-law, who had been a Lakist in previous years, and quartered for some time, with his family, in Southey's house, had, as we have seen, broken away from the Lakes for a while, gone abroad, gone to Somersetshire, but again gravitated to the mill-horse round of London. Having sent his wife and children back to Southey's, however, he had at length followed them himself, to try the Lakes once more; and, from late in 1809 to the middle of 1810, Coleridge was to be again a denizen of the district, moving between Southey's at Keswick and Wordsworth's at Grasmere, but on the whole preferring to be with Wordsworth. Here, through that time, he was to be engaged in bringing out his periodical called *The Friend*, which was printed at Penrith, and the bad management of which was to bring the whole concern to bankruptcy in the twenty-ninth number. Three other literary notabilities of the Lake District, at the time of De Quincey's advent there, deserve especial mention. One was Dr. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, now seventy-two years of age, but with seven years of life still before him, living at his mansion of Calgarth Park, on Windermere, eight miles south from Grasmere, and altogether the leading personage in the society of the region, from his ecclesiastical rank and great wealth, his hospitality and conversational ability, and the recollection of his extraordinary series of publications. A much humbler man, but loved beyond expression by all his intimate friends, was Charles Lloyd, living at Brathay, about halfway between Calgarth and Grasmere, originally a Quaker,

but now a kind of Lakist Rousseau, revealing philosophic powers that had not been guessed from his published poems. The time was yet some years distant when this fine intellect, overclouded by a growing lunacy, was to be withdrawn from Brathay to die abroad. Finally, a recent comer into the Lake District, proprietor since 1807 of Elleray, also on Windermere, about a mile from Calgarth, was a young Scoto-Oxonian of whom the world was to hear more than of either Bishop Watson or Charles Lloyd. This was John Wilson, afterwards known as Professor Wilson and "Christopher North." He was almost exactly of De Quincey's own age, or but three months older; but what a contrast between them physically,—De Quincey one of the smallest and feeblest-looking of mortals, hardly more than five feet high, while Wilson was one of the most magnificent young athletes that ever attracted men's or women's eyes in street or on heather. His stature close on six feet, his frame proportioned into the very ideal of a Hercules-Apollo of the Scandinavian or yellow-haired type, masking immensity of strength under the litheness of a leopard, he carried also one of the noblest and most poetic of heads ever set on beautifully square human shoulders. Then, what a reputation he had brought with him from Oxford, where, strangely enough, he had been a gentleman-commoner of Magdalen College all the time of De Quincey's residence in the University, though they had never then met! While De Quincey had been creeping through the University, a bookish opium-eating recluse, Wilson had been the most observed man of all the colleges, not more for his magnificent physique and his unapproachable applications of it in pugilistic matches, leaping matches, and all other kinds of University sports, than for his universal sociability,

exuberance of humour, easy triumphs in the classics and whatever else he cared to compete in, and promises of some unusual form of literary effulgence not yet distinctly featured. With this kind of reputation preceding him from Oxford, it was as if he had bounded into the Lake District, rather than merely settled in it; and already the splendid young Mr. Wilson of Elleray, to whom his father, a Paisley manufacturer, had left a clear fortune of 50,000*l.*, was known not only to all his neighbours that were likely to think of that matter, but also to every boatman, every innkeeper, every crack wrestler or boxer, every band of gipsies or other vagrants, over the whole region.

In this mere enumeration there is already implied a good deal of De Quincey's life through the six or seven years at present under notice. The mile of road from his own cottage to Wordsworth's house of Allan Bank was his familiar walk morning and evening from the first, for the sake of Wordsworth's society, and also of Coleridge's, so long as Coleridge, busy in bringing out his *Friend*, remained Wordsworth's guest. As many as 500 books at a time from the very considerable library which De Quincey had in his cottage, a large portion of it consisting of German books, would, he tells us, be in Wordsworth's house in those days for Coleridge's use,—Wordsworth's own library being the most wretched thing that ever went by that name, a mere litter of tattered odd volumes on a few shelves. The distance from Southey, whose library was the chief distinction of his house, prevented such frequent intercourse with him as with the Wordsworths; nor was De Quincey ever bound to Southey by any very close intimacy. He did occasionally visit at Greta Hall, however, and was able, "in a

qualified sense," to call Southey his friend; and we find Southey, in a letter to a correspondent in 1810, making mention of De Quincey in rather memorable terms. "De Quincey," he says, 'is a singular man, but better informed than any person almost that I ever met at his age." That De Quincey was among the numerous visitors of the great Bishop Watson at Calgarth Park, and thus came to know that celebrity personally, is no mere guess. "This dignitary," he tells us, "I knew myself as much as I wished to know him: he *was* interesting; yet also *not* interesting;" and he goes on to sketch for us his portrait of the somewhat pompous and worldly, yet kindly, jovial, candid, and strong-headed septuagenarian, whom, pluralist and sinecurist though he had been all his life, and all but avowedly at his own table a Socinian and free-thinker, the Whigs had wished to make Archbishop of York. At Brathay De Quincey was a constant visitor, sometimes in solitary conversation for hours with the philosophic Charles Lloyd himself, sometimes at one of Lloyd's well-attended dinner parties, sometimes looking on at one of those evening parties of young people that Lloyd liked to see gathered at his house. It had been at one of these evening parties at Lloyd's, apparently in the year 1808, that De Quincey had first seen Wilson,—dancing radiantly and indefatigably, and chiefly with a Miss Jane Penny, "the leading belle of the Lake Country;" but it was in Wordsworth's house that the first formal introduction took place. It was Wordsworth himself, when De Quincey entered his room one morning and found a stranger with him, that pronounced the words of introduction, "*Mr. Wilson of Elleray*," in his usual deep tones. From the time of this introduction the two were fast friends, some

unusually strong elective affinity attaching the magnificent master of Elleray to his puny neighbour. There was talk between them of a tour together to Spain, the Mediterranean, and the East; and, though that came to nothing, they contrived to be together as much as possible, whenever Wilson was at Elleray, and not, as happened pretty often, away in Edinburgh on the business of his nominal preparation for the Scottish Bar. It must have been a sight to see the two together in one of Wilson's fishing expeditions among the Lakes, or in their joint rambles over the hills, the little De Quincey trudging side by side with his majestic comrade. But De Quincey was a capital walker, never satisfied without his ten or fifteen miles daily in the open air. Even in that matter, therefore, he and Wilson were well enough matched; while it may be doubted whether in the subtle, scholarly, whimsical, and deeply reasoned bits of brain-product which the smaller man gave to the larger in the course of their walks, in exchange for the laughs and wild immethodic chaunts which prophesied the future Christopher, the larger man may not have had the better bargain. When Wilson was not at Elleray, or even when he was there, De Quincey delighted much in long, aimless walks by himself, especially nocturnal walks.

More and more, it seems, after 1810, when Coleridge took his final departure from the Lakes, there had been a gradual waning of the friendship between De Quincey and Wordsworth. They were still much together; Wordsworth still consulted De Quincey about his poems, or lines in his poems; and De Quincey's admiration of the hero in his poetic character remained unabated. But, whether because Wordsworth, in his self-absorption, found De Quincey's companionship unnecessary, or be-

cause De Quincey felt his nerves jarred by Wordsworth's habitual austerity and masculine hardness, certain it is that there came at length to be some degree of mutual alienation. This was recompensed in part by the fidelity of Dorothy Wordsworth's liking for De Quincey and by the growing attachment to him of Wordsworth's children. The Wordsworth children were never tired of talking of "Kinsey," and the presents he brought them. "Kinsey! Kinsey! what a' bring Katy from London?" were the parting words of one of them, his favourite little Kate Wordsworth, as he was going away for a while. He remembered the words and quoted them in a letter which he wrote to Dorothy Wordsworth on hearing of the young thing's death in his absence, June 4, 1812. His grief over the death of this child passed all that is common in that kind of experience.

Only a part of the life of a man, even at the Lakes, can consist in walks and talks out-of-doors with friends, or in visits to the houses of neighbours. Much of it, all the best of it, must consist in what he does by himself within the four walls that enclose him when he is not dependent on others. Have we any glimpse of De Quincey and his occupations in his solitary bachelorhood in his pretty, rose-embowered, cottage at Grasmere? We have; and it ought to be quoted. It is the passage where, overleaping the interval from his Oxford life, he presents himself as he was in 1812, two hundred and fifty miles away from Oxford, and buried among mountains:—

> And what am I doing amongst the mountains? Taking opium. Yes; but what else? Why, reader, in 1812, the year we are now arrived at, as well as for some years previous, I have been chiefly studying German metaphysics, or the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, &c. And how, and in what manner

do I live? in short, what class or description of men do I belong to? I am at this period,—viz., in 1812,—living in a cottage; and with a single female servant (*honi soit qui mal y pense*), who, amongst my neighbours, passes by the name of my "housekeeper." And, as a scholar and a man of learned education, I may presume to class myself as an unworthy member of that indefinite body called *gentlemen*. Partly on the ground I have assigned,—partly because, from having no visible calling or business, it is rightly judged that I must be living on my private fortune,—I am so classed by my neighbours; and, by the courtesy of modern England, I am usually addressed on letters, &c., *Esquire*. . . . Am I married? Not yet. And I still take opium? On Saturday nights. And, perhaps, have taken it unblushingly ever since "the rainy Sunday," and "the stately Pantheon," and "the beatific druggist" of 1804? Even so. And how do I find my health after all this opium-eating? in short, how do I do? Why, pretty well, I thank you, reader. In fact, if I dared to say the real and simple truth (though, in order to satisfy the theories of some medical men, I ought to be ill), I was never better in my life than in the spring of 1812; and I hope sincerely that the quantity of claret, port, or "London particular Madeira," which, in all probability, you, good reader, have taken, and design to take, for every term of eight years during your natural life, may as little disorder your health as mine was disordered by all the opium I had taken (though in quantity such that I might well have bathed and swum in it) for the eight years between 1804 and 1812.

Translated into stricter biographical language, this means, in the first place, that De Quincey had been a hard student during his residence at the Lakes, burning the midnight oil a good deal over his books of all sorts, but especially over the later German transcendentalists. Nothing is said of that other exercise which is the sole salvation of any man situated as De Quincey was, and without which reading and reverie are but an Epicurean waste of spirit,—actual *production* of some kind or other,

by a wide-awake exertion of one's own faculties, out of the stuff of one's readings and reveries. We may, however, if we choose, suppose piles of papers on his table, if only in the form of abstracts of the books read, and comments and criticisms on them for his own edification. Of this we are less certain than of the other fact of which the extract assures us. He had brought the habit of opium-taking to the Lakes with him; and an indispensable article on his table, on one night of the week at least, when he was seated by himself, and the shutters were shut, and the candles lit, and the fire burning brightly, was the opium decanter!

De Quincey's intimations on this subject are perfectly plain. Through the eight years preceding 1812 he had, he says, persisted uninterruptedly in the use of opium, with a gradual increase both in the frequency of his doses and of the quantity of each, but still,—so he could flatter himself,—with no signs of permanent injury. But, within a year, he goes on to say, the case was altered. The year 1813, he intimates, was a fatal one in his history. There had been some calamity of a private kind, causing him great distress. What it was he does not say; but it seems to have been some serious catastrophe in his pecuniary affairs. This may be inferred from a letter to him from his uncle, Colonel Penson, sent from Futtygur in India, and dated 16th July, 1813. "I have heard that your "affairs are not prosperous," the letter begins, "though "of the nature or extent of your misfortunes I have no "information. Yet, as it has pleased God to bless me "beyond either hope or expectation since I left England, "I feel that in requesting your acceptance of the enclosed "I am not violating," &c. What the good uncle enclosed was a handsome draft for his nephew's help. It may

have been to the same unfortunate crisis in De Quincey's affairs that there had been reference in a note sent him by Wordsworth some months before, when he was away on one of his rambles from Grasmere. The main purpose was to inform him of the death of another of Wordsworth's children, little Tommy, who had been a pet of De Quincey's; but the note ends, "Most tenderly and lovingly, with heavy sorrow for you, my dear friend, I remain yours, W. WORDSWORTH." Whether the calamity was of the kind here suggested or not, it had very important effects on De Quincey's health, and, through them, on his dealings with opium. "I was attacked," he says, "by a most appalling irritation of the stomach, in all re- "spects the same as that which had caused me so much "suffering in youth, and accompanied by a revival of the "old dreams. Now, then, it was,—viz., in the year "1813,—that I became a regular and confirmed (no "longer an intermitting) opium-eater." He explains what he means by informing us that from this time the use of the drug increased and increased upon him till it reached the monstrous allowance of 320 grains of solid opium, or 8000 drops of laudanum, per day. It may convey a more exact idea if we add that 8000 drops would fill about seven ordinary wine-glasses.

That this exchange of the practice of a periodical or intermittent opium-debauch for the character of a confirmed and daily opium-eater, was accompanied by some speedy experience of those opium-horrors of which he has left us such vivid descriptions, may be taken for granted. It is to a later period, however, that he refers his full experience of those opium-horrors; and what we should gather from his brief accounts of himself for the year or two immediately following 1813 is rather that he was not

yet in the stage of that most awful experience of the effects of opium, but simply under an increasing cloud of gloom, with a torpor of the intellectual faculties. The recorded incidents of those years are very few, and relate chiefly to some rambles away from the Lakes. Several times, as we are told, he was in London; and every year, it appears, he was for some time in Somersetshire or elsewhere in the West of England, visiting his mother and her friends. It was in one of those visits to Somersetshire, in 1814, and at Hannah More's house, that he met Mrs. Siddons, then retiring from the stage in her fifty-ninth year, and was amused by an animated debate which he heard between the two ladies on the points of Calvinism, till Hannah More's ladylike tact changed the subject and wiled Mrs. Siddons into her charming recollections of Johnson and Garrick. But a more memorable visit than any to Somersetshire was that which he paid to Edinburgh, for the first time, in the winter of 1814-15.

Wilson, who had been a married man since 1811, when the fore-mentioned Miss Jane Penny, the belle of the Lake District, became his wife, had been coming and going as before between Edinburgh and Elleray. He had also published his *Isle of Palms* and other poems; he was about to be called to the Edinburgh Bar; and, being still in the enjoyment of his large patrimonial fortune, though very soon to lose it by the misconduct of a relative, he was now, in his thirtieth year, a shining figure in Edinburgh society. Twice or thrice he had tried to bring De Quincey with him from the Lakes; but not till now had he succeeded. The months of the winter of 1814-15 which De Quincey did spend in Edinburgh were a subject of brilliant recollection long afterwards. Of Scott and Jeffrey he seems to have seen nothing, or nothing

more than their physiognomies in the streets or the Parliament House; but the group of less-known but rising men that was gathered round Wilson and his brothers, forming the Young Edinburgh of that date, was sufficiently interesting in itself. There was Sir William Hamilton, in his twenty-seventh year, already nominally a Scottish advocate, but really an omnivorous scholar, and, as the world came in time to know, the nearest approach to an Aristotle *redivivus* in the British Logic and Metaphysics of his generation. There was Sir William's younger brother, Thomas Hamilton, known afterwards as the author of *Cyril Thornton*, a novel of considerable merit. There was Scott's friend, William Allan the painter, afterwards Sir William Allan and President of the Royal Scottish Academy. There was a certain Robert Pierce Gillies, of the Scottish Bar, more of an invalid than the rest of the group, but versatile in literature, full of literary gossip, and noted in those days for the "all but princely" style of his hospitalities. Finally, not to mention others then walking the Parliament House as budding barristers, afterwards to be judges or big-wigs of some kind, there was John Gibson Lockhart, yet only in his twenty-first year, and not to be called to the Bar till two years hence, but already beginning to be recognised on the verge of the Young Edinburgh set for his literary promise and his scorpion readiness in sting and caricature. In the circle of these, with Wilson's house as the centre, De Quincey moved during his stay in Edinburgh, welcome among them from the first, and leaving among them no ordinary impression. Mr. R. P. Gillies has commemorated particularly the effects of his conversation. "The talk might be "of 'beeves,' and he could grapple with them, if expected "to do so: but his musical cadences were not in keeping

"with such work, and in a few minutes (not without "some strictly logical sequence) he would escape at will "from beeves to butterflies, and thence to the soul's im- "mortality, to Plato, and Kant, and Schelling, and "Fichte, to Milton's early years and Shakespeare's Son- "nets, to Wordsworth and Coleridge, to Homer and "Æschylus, to St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Basil, and St. "Chrysostom." As yet, it is to be remembered, De Quincey had not published a line of his own.

For incidents in De Quincey's bachelor life at the Lakes after his return from Edinburgh we search in vain, unless we may count among them his famous, but undated, adventure with the Malay. He was sitting in his room in his cottage one day when he was informed that there was a strange dark man in the kitchen. Going to the rescue of the alarmed girl who had admitted the man, he found him to be a poor Malay tramp, in a turban and dingy white trousers, whom some accident had brought into those parts. He had some food and rest; and, at his departure, De Quincey, who could not understand a word he said, but guessed that as an Asiatic he might be no stranger to opium, presented him with some. The Malay, after looking at the piece given him, "enough to kill some half-dozen dragoons together with their horses," immediately bolted the whole at one mouthful. De Quincey felt anxious for some days; but, as he never heard that a dead Malay had been found on the roads thereabouts, he became satisfied that no harm had been done.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIED LIFE AT THE LAKES: PROSTRATION UNDER OPIUM
PROVINCIAL EDITORSHIP.

1816—1821.

We have had a picture from De Quincey himself of his life in his cottage at Grasmere in the year 1812. Here is a companion picture, also by himself, of his life in the same cottage in 1816-17:—

Let there be a cottage, standing in a valley, eighteen miles from any town; no spacious valley, but about two miles long by three-quarters of a mile in average width,—the benefit of which provision is that all families resident within its circuit will comprise, as it were, one larger household, personally familiar to your eye, and more or less interesting to your affections. Let the mountains be real mountains, between 3000 and 4000 feet high, and the cottage a real cottage, not (as a witty author has it) "a cottage with a double coach-house;" let it be, in fact (for I must abide by the actual scene), a white cottage, embowered with flowering shrubs, so chosen as to unfold a succession of flowers upon the walls, and clustering around the windows, through all the months of spring, summer, and autumn; beginning, in fact, with May roses, and ending with jasmine. Let it, however, *not* be spring, nor summer, nor autumn, but winter in its sternest shape. . . . But here, to save myself the trouble of too much verbal description, I will introduce a painter, and give him directions for the rest of the picture. Painters do not like white cottages, unless a good deal weather-stained; but,

as the reader now understands that it is a winter night, his services will not be required except for the *inside* of the house.—Paint me, then, a room seventeen feet by twelve, and not more than seven and a half feet high. This, reader, is somewhat ambitiously styled, in my family, the drawing-room; but, being contrived "a double debt to pay," it is also, and more justly, termed the library; for it happens that books are the only article of property in which I am richer than my neighbours. Of these I have about 5000, collected gradually since my eighteenth year. Therefore, painter, put as many as you can into this room. Make it populous with books; and, furthermore, paint me a good fire, and furniture plain and modest, befitting the unpretending cottage of a scholar. And near the fire paint me a tea-table; and (as it is clear that no creature can come to see me on such a stormy night) place only two cups and saucers on the tea-tray; and, if you know how to paint such a thing, symbolically or otherwise, paint me an eternal tea-pot,—eternal *a parte ante* and *a parte post;* for I usually drink tea from eight o'clock at night to four in the morning. And, as it is very unpleasant to make tea, or to pour it out, for one's self, paint me a lovely young woman sitting at the table. Paint her arms like Aurora's, and her smiles like Hebe's; but no, dear M——! not even in jest let me insinuate that thy power to illuminate my cottage rests upon a tenure so perishable as mere personal beauty, or that the witchcraft of angelic smiles lies within the empire of any earthly pencil. Pass, then, my good painter, to something more within its power; and the next article brought forward should naturally be myself,—a picture of the Opium-eater, with his "little golden receptacle of the pernicious drug" lying beside him on the table. As to the opium, I have no objection to see a picture of *that;* you may paint it, if you choose; but I apprise you that no "little" receptacle would, even in 1816, answer *my* purpose, who was at a distance from the "stately Pantheon" and all druggists (mortal or otherwise). No: you may as well paint the real receptacle, which was not of gold, but of glass, and as much like a sublunary wine-decanter as possible. In fact, one day, by a series of happily conceived experiments, I discovered that

it *was* a decanter. Into this you may put a quart of ruby-coloured laudanum; that, and a book of German metaphysics placed by its side, will sufficiently attest my being in the neighbourhood.

The fair tea-maker of this passage, styled "dear M——," was De Quincey's wife, whom he married in the end of 1816. She was a Margaret Simpson, daughter of a small Westmoreland farmer, living at a place called "The Nab," near De Quincey's cottage, and sometimes confounded now with that cottage by tourists, the rather because De Quincey alternated a good deal between the two after his marriage. At the date of the marriage the bride was eighteen years of age, De Quincey being thirty-one. For a while before the event, and in anticipation of it, De Quincey had, as he tells us, "suddenly and without any considerable effort," reduced his daily allowance of opium from 320 grains or 8000 drops to 40 grains or 1000 drops. The effect had been magical. The "cloud of profoundest melancholy" which had rested on his brain passed away; his mind could think as healthily as ever before; he could read Kant again, or any other hard writer, with clear intelligence. And so for a while after the marriage, till he could count about a year altogether of parenthetic peace and happiness in this portion of his life. "It was a year of brilliant water (to speak after the "manner of jewellers), set, as it were, and insulated, in "the gloomy umbrage of opium." For, as he goes on to inform us, his restriction of himself to the diminished allowance was but temporary; and from some time in 1817, on through 1818, and even into 1819, he was again under the full dominion of the fell agent, rising once more to his 8000 drops *per diem*, or even sometimes to 12,000 drops. This, accordingly, was the time

of that most intimate and tremendous experience of the opium-horrors in his own case which he has described in part of his *Confessions*.

His description fully bears out the accepted belief, confirmed so strikingly by the similar case of Coleridge, that one inevitable effect of opium-eating is paralysis of the will. With his intellectual apprehensions of duty as keen as ever, he could propose or execute nothing; he was as powerless as an infant for any practical effort. Everything was neglected or procrastinated; the domestic economy, so far as it depended on himself, might have gone to wreck; letters, however urgent, lay about unanswered. Further, there was a paralysis of that very physical craving which, if gratified, might have furnished so far a counteractive to the opium. While he had always before needed and liked long walks, and while his sole chance now lay in enormous exercise of that kind, he sank into a state of hopeless sedentariness. Add to all this the protracted, ever-varying, never-ceasing nightmare of his opium-dreams. On this subject he has left us many pages, blending records of his own dreams with such a science or philosophy of opium-dreaming in general as perhaps no other man ever attempted. Biographically, the following is the substance: —That faculty of day-dreaming, of projecting optical images or fancies out of one's own mind into the air, which is constitutionally strong in some, and which had been unusually strong in De Quincey from his infancy, was now intensified by his opium-eating into an ungovernable propensity. Especially at night, as he lay awake in bed, his thoughts translated themselves into visions which could not be dismissed, or visions would come of themselves, in the form of "vast processions" and "friezes of never-ending stories" painted on the darkness. This morbid activity of

the faculty of visual creation pursued him into sleep. It seemed as if a theatre were "suddenly opened and lighted up" within his brain, for the performance, regularly as sleep came, of nightly extravaganzas and phantasmagories. What had troubled the phantasy already by day would reappear in the night with wonderful transmutations and expansions, or any subject that had been thought of by day would present itself at night in amazing dream-scenery and allegory. But, on the whole, the resources of material for the repeated nightly pageant seemed boundless. What should come, or whence it came, was incalculable. It was as if among the specific potencies of opium was that of searching out whatever was stored up and dormant anyhow in the most secret intricacies of the nervous organism, unlocking all doors, compelling all the hoarded photographic impressions of all that had happened in the life of a human being from the hour of birth to yesterday, all that had gone into oblivion with himself and was known to God only, to flash out again, and become real and significant once more in the dreamy revel. But it was also as if, with all this recovery of the forgotten actual, the bounds of ordinary sense-experience were burst, and the world of the dreams was not the human world, but some other, infernal or supernal. The sense of space, and latterly the sense of time, were strangely affected. One moved, or hung, or sank, in measureless chasms, unshored astronomical abysses, or depths without a star; minutes shot out into years, or centuries were shrivelled into minutes. When the dream-scenery was most earthly, there was never any comfort in it, but always a sense of misery, dread, struggle and battle, eternal pursuit of something, or eternal flight from some unescapable enemy. He gives specimens of some of the dreams that were most frequent or most

hideous. Sometimes, in some recollection of the Malay, the dream-imagery was Oriental, Egypt adding her horrors to those of China and Hindostan, and all three yielding a monstrous jumble of things animate and inanimate, amid which he was compelled to move and suffer, seeking refuge in vain in pagodas and their most secret rooms, or chased for ages through tropical forests, or buried in caves with mummies and sphinxes and all the abominations of the ibis and the crocodile. At other times, though the dream-scenery at first might be Oriental or Alpine, or of grave-yards in some quiet valley, it would turn at last into multitudinous and lamp-lit London, with its mazes and labyrinths of streets, and through those mazes and labyrinths he would himself be wandering round and round, amid legions of ruffianly faces, groping in vain for the lost Ann of Oxford Street.

To wake day after day at noon from such night-mare miseries and be aware of his wife and children standing by him, and to know that, when the day waned, it would only be to plunge him again into the hideous tumult of his other or opium-generated existence, became an agony unsufferable. He shrank from the approach of sleep, and longed to sleep no more. His condition in his waking hours was that of a "suicidal despondency;" there seemed no exit from his wretchedness but suicide or lunacy. At last, however,—just when the reader is tired of the monotony of so much misery, and pity is passing into something like disgust, especially in recollection of the young wife and mother who had to be the nurse of her opium-besotted husband, and indeed when one has been taking refuge from the necessity of such disgust in the fancy that matters were not so bad as they are described, and that some of the more hideous opium-dreams were

subsequent constructions of literary genius, in which fiction was piled upon remembered fact,—just at this point one is able to leave the ugly sea of storm and confusion, and to set foot on a landing-place. This we do in the year 1819. There had, indeed, been a gleam of returning hope in the previous year. In the very thickest depth of De Quincey's mental obscuration, when he could attend to nothing, and had abandoned a certain great philosophical work, "*De Emendatione Humani Intellectus*," which he had projected in imitation of Spinoza, he had been roused by the receipt, from a friend in Edinburgh, of a copy of Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy*, then recently published. The book fascinated him; he could read and enjoy it; he admired the author prodigiously; Ricardo seemed to him the first man who had shot light and order into what had hitherto been but a "dark chaos of materials." He was moved even to write, or to dictate to his wife, thoughts that grew out of his reading. There had thus grown in his hands the manuscript of a book or pamphlet entitled "*Prolegomena to all Future Systems of Political Economy*." The book had been actually advertised, and arrangements made for printing it, when the opium-torpor again fell upon him, and the manuscript was left incomplete. Now, however, in 1819, he shook himself free with more effect. The circumstances are left shadowy; and it does not seem that it was then, or till a while later, that he achieved what he calls his "triumph," or release for a good while together from his thraldom to opium. Enough is told, however, to show that, notwithstanding all the exertions of his gentle wife, the *res angusta domi* had become so severe in the cottage at Grasmere that even the opium-torpor had to relax its hold and permit the master of the household to rise and

look about him. By some immense effort, De Quincey had moderated his dependence on the drug, and was looking about him in something like restored capacity for work, when,—O, bathos from the projected "*De Emendatione Humani Intellectus*" and the "*Prolegomena to all Future Systems of Political Economy*"!—he was caught by the Westmoreland Tories and converted into the editor of their local newspaper.

The *Westmoreland Gazette* had been started in 1818, during the general election of that year, when Mr. Brougham had the first of his three unsuccessful contests for the great northern county. It was started at Kendal, on funds raised by gentlemen who were "friends to the Constitution," to oppose the "infamous levelling doctrines" of Mr. Brougham, and of the local Whig organ called the *Kendal Chronicle*. An editor had been procured from London, but had turned out a failure; and about the middle of 1819 the editorship was offered to De Quincey. They had offered him a salary of 160*l.* a year; but, as this was to be for the performance of all the duties, and as that involved residence in Kendal, De Quincey preferred an arrangement by which he was to pay a sub-editor to do the drudgery at Kendal, keeping the surplus for himself for his leading articles and supervising editorship from Grasmere. The sub-editor whom he engaged would not take less than two guineas a week, leaving but 50*l.* 16*s.* for his chief; but the proprietors handsomely made up this sum to 54*l.* 12*s.*, or a complete guinea a week. Of all this De Quincey sent a detailed account, in very hopeful terms, to his uncle in India, informing the colonel at the same time that he had engagements with *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*, which would bring him 180*l.* a year more, and concluding with a request

to be allowed to draw upon the colonel for 500*l.*, "say 150*l.* now, and the other 350*l.* in six or eight months hence." This would re-establish him for life, he said, and he looked forward to a removal to London, to resume his training for the profession of the law.

The specimens given by Mr. Page, from the files of the *Westmoreland Gazette*, of De Quincey's leading articles and notices to correspondents during his time of editorship, confirm Mr. Page's general conclusion that he "was not born for a successful newspaper editor." Perhaps the most characteristic of the quoted specimens is an article in which, in answer to remonstrances that he was flying over the heads of his readers, he expounds his ideas of provincial editorship in general and of the prospects of the *Westmoreland Gazette* in particular. "The editor" he says "can assure his readers that his own personal friends "in most of the Universities, especially in the three "weightiest,—Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh,—are "quite competent in number and power to float the "*Gazette* triumphantly into every section and division of "those learned bodies." Nor was this all. While not neglecting the demands of his humbler constituents of Westmoreland, he could not forget that well-educated and learned readers were numerous in the county. For their sakes, he is proud to intimate that he "has received "assurances of support from two of the most illustrious "men in point of intellectual pretensions that have ap- "peared for some ages,"—whether Wordsworth and Coleridge, or Wordsworth and Southey, is not quite obvious. But even this is not all. "The editor will go "a step further. He will venture to affirm that, even "without the powerful aid here noticed (to which he "might have added a promise of co-operation from London,

"the four great commercial towns of the second class, many "of the third class, and so downwards, as also occasion- "ally from Paris and Vienna, from Canada, and from "Hindostan, &c.),—even without the powerful aid here "noticed, he could singly and unsupported secure to the "*Gazette* one feature of originality which would draw "upon it a general notice throughout Great Britain." Was not German Literature a yet unworked mine of wealth, an absolute Potosi; and might not the editor say without vanity, since his part would be only that of selecting and translating, that no journal in the kingdom could draw on this mine so easily, or exhibit such nuggets from it weekly, as the *Westmoreland Gazette?*—All this for a guinea a-week to the editor at Grasmere, with two guineas a week for the grimy cormorant drudging for him in some public-house at Kendal! There is something like evidence, however, that the cormorant was dismissed, and that De Quincey took up his quarters for some time at Kendal, uniting the functions of editor and sub-editor, and, it is to be hoped, their salaries. There is one letter from him to his wife, at all events, dated "Commercial Inn, 11 o'clock on Thursday night," which presents him as then in Kendal by himself, before a table covered with printer's proofs, and very heavy-hearted at being away from Grasmere. He has been vexed particularly by news of the illness of his little child Margaret. "God bless her, poor little lamb!" he ejaculates affectionately, adding that, if his wife cannot come to Kendal to-morrow, he will try to be at Grasmere next week.

After all, De Quincey seems to have done not badly in his editorship, even by the standard of the Tory gentlemen of Westmoreland. If the local circulation was not large, the matter administered was probably more

acceptable to the country folks than that of Coleridge's *Friend*. One thing the editorship had done for De Quincey himself. It had given him a liking for the sight of printer's proofs. Accordingly, his editorship of the *Westmoreland Gazette* having come to an end some time in 1820, or been converted, by understanding with the proprietors, into a mere contributorship thenceforward, he was on the outlook for other literary employment. Not unnaturally, his thoughts turned first to Edinburgh, where his friend Wilson, now Professor of Moral Philosophy, had since 1817 been the lord of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and he and Lockhart and a band of daring young Tories about them had made that magazine at once a terror and a new splendour in the island, and where there was no lack of other literary possibilities and openings. The engagement on *Blackwood* mentioned by De Quincey to his uncle in 1819 had, it would appear, turned out a quasi-engagement only; and in the end of 1820 he is found in Edinburgh in person, examining chances on the spot. In a letter to his wife thence, dated Dec. 9, 1820, he speaks of the cordial reception he has had among his old Edinburgh friends. Nothing definite, however, seems to have come of the visit. Wilson, one cannot doubt, did his best; but there may have been difficulties. And so, not yet an actual contributor to *Blackwood*, but only a potential contributor, De Quincey was back at his home in the Lakes early in 1821. It was in London, and not in Edinburgh, that he was first to appear as a writer in Magazines.

CHAPTER VII.

PARTLY IN LONDON, PARTLY AT THE LAKES, PARTLY IN EDINBURGH: THE "CONFESSIONS" AND OTHER ARTICLES IN THE "LONDON MAGAZINE," AND FIRST ARTICLES IN "BLACKWOOD."

1821—1830.

THE metropolitan magazine of chief note in those days was *The London Magazine*. It had been established in January 1820, with Messrs. Baldwin, Cradock, and Co., for the publishers, and the Aberdonian Mr. John Scott for editor; but, in July 1821, after the death of Scott in his unfortunate duel, it passed into the hands of Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, who were thenceforward themselves the editors. And very good editors they were. Aiming high, and having retained the best of the contributors in Scott's time and added others, they had already, in 1821, a sufficiently remarkable staff about them, whom they kept in good humour and a kind of stimulated unity of endeavour, not only by what was then considered liberal pay, but also by an excellent monthly dinner, for talk and wit-combat, at the expense of the firm. Keats, who had contributed verses to the earlier numbers, had died in February 1821; but Charles Lamb, at the age of forty-six, and under his newly adopted signature of "Elia," was obliging Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, and the world, with fresh specimens of his charming Essays. Among

the other contributors were, or were to be, Hazlitt, John Hamilton Reynolds, the stalwart Allan Cunningham, the Rev. Henry Francis Cary, John Poole, George Darley, Bryan Waller Procter, and Thomas Hood. This last, indeed, at the age of twenty-three, was a kind of assistant-editor. There was also a certain shabby-genteel and bejewelled effeminate, named Thomas Griffith Wainwright, whose department was the Fine Arts, and who, under the signature of "Janus Weathercock," wrote most of the articles on great painters and engravers, and criticisms of contemporary pictures. He was to die in Australia long afterwards as a convict who had been transported for forgery, but who was known also, by evidence irresistible, as the murderer, by poison, of two young ladies, boarders in his house, on whose lives he had speculated for a total of 18,000*l.* by scattered investments in different insurance-offices.

It is curious to look over the old volumes of the *London Magazine* now, and to observe the papers in them that have become classic. It was in the number for September 1821, or about two months after Messrs. Taylor and Hessey had become proprietors, that there appeared a paper of twenty pages entitled *Confessions of an Opium-Eater, being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*. That there were unusual expectations of popularity for this piece is proved by the appended editorial note (? by young Hood), stating that "the remainder of this very interesting article will be given in the next number." Accordingly, the number for October 1821 leads off with Part II. of the *Confessions* in 27 pages. It contains, moreover, a notice from the author explanatory of the dates in the First Part, and another editorial paragraph of congratulation over the new contributor. "We are

"not often in the habit of eulogizing our own work," says the paragraph; "but we cannot neglect the opportunity "which the following explanatory note gives us of calling "the attention of our readers to the deep, eloquent, and "masterly paper which stands first in our present number." The *Confessions*, in fact, were widely read, and roused much curiosity. The cry, on all hands, was for more of the same extraordinary matter. That was not so easy; but in the number for December 1821 there appeared a letter from the Opium-Eater, signed "X.Y.Z.," courteously rebuking Mr. James Montgomery for his scepticism as to the authenticity of the *Confessions*, and promising a Third Part in time. Meanwhile, in the same number, the public had from the new author, signing himself "Grasmeriensis Teutonizans," a paper *On the Writings of John Paul Frederick Richter*, including a translated specimen. Then, for a whole year, there was a break, the promise of a continuation of the *Confessions* hanging unfulfilled, and the readers of the magazine having to content themselves with other fare, the best morsel of which was Charles Lamb's "Dissertation on Roast Pig" in September 1822. In that year, 1822, however, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey had the pleasure of bringing out the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* in a separate little duodecimo volume, the author's name still suppressed. They would fain still have had the promised continuation in their magazine, and apologized to their readers for not having been able to fulfil that engagement. By way of compensation, they were glad to publish, through the years 1823 and 1824, everything that De Quincey chose to give them, taking care that it should be known that the articles were by "The English Opium-Eater."

In January 1823 were begun *Letters to a Young Man*

whose Education has been neglected, continued in the numbers for February, March, May, and June; in the April number, which these "Letters" had skipped, appeared a sketch of Herder under the title *The Death of a German Great Man*; and, not to mention less important contributions straggling through the numbers of the year, the September number contained the first instalment, and the October and November numbers two more instalments, of the series of papers entitled generally *Notes from the Pocket-Book of a late Opium-Eater*, and sub-titled individually "Walking Stewart," "Malthus, "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth," "English Dictionaries," &c. In December 1823 an *Answer of the Opium-Eater to Mr. Hazlitt's Letter respecting Mr. Malthus*, and a paper *On Malthus's Measure of Value*, made the public further aware of the Opium-Eater's pretensions in Political Economy.—The year 1824 was not less prolific. The January number for that year gave the first part of the Opium-Eater's *Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and Freemasons*, continued in February and March and not concluded till June; the February number gave also *Analects from John Paul Richter*, in the form of five more translated specimens of that author; the March number gave, as an additional specimen of Richter, his *Dream upon the Universe;* and in various numbers from March to July there were further instalments of *Notes from the Pocket-Book of a late Opium-Eater*. Thus we arrive at the months of August and September 1824, made memorable by a special contribution from the Opium-Eater. Another British pioneer of German Literature had recently appeared in Mr. Thomas Carlyle, ten years younger than De Quincey, and of limited reputation as yet. His translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* had just been

published anonymously in Edinburgh; and, having been recommended to the *London Magazine* by Edward Irving, he was breaking up, to be sent from Scotland, for anonymous publication in that magazine, his *Life of Schiller*, then in manuscript. The first portion of the Life had appeared in the number for October 1823; the second portion had appeared in the number for January 1824, along with the first instalment of De Quincey's Rosicrucian Inquiry; the third had appeared in July 1824 (Carlyle then on his first visit to London); and the remainder came out in August and September. It was rather hard that in those very two numbers there should appear De Quincey's article on Goethe, founded on his fellow-contributor's *Translation of Wilhelm Meister*. In the main, it is true, the article was an onslaught on Goethe himself, an attempt to drag him down from the eminence claimed for him by his translator and others, and to represent him as a tedious and immoral old impostor; but the translator came in for a share of the blame. He was taken to task for his Scotticisms, his mistakes in the German, and generally for the stiffness and awkwardness of his English prose. Altogether the critique was, as Carlyle has owned, a rather annoying log of offence thrown across his path at that moment. After the article on Goethe, De Quincey's contributions to the magazine in 1824 were *Walladmor: Analysis of a German Novel*, and a translation of Kant's *Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan*, both in the October number, and a paper entitled *Falsification of the History of England*, which appeared in the number for December.

The connexion of De Quincey with the *London Magazine* seems to have ceased after 1824, in consequence of arrangements about that time by Messrs. Taylor and

Hessey for quitting the proprietorship. But others were on the alert for anything from the pen of "The Opium-Eater." Mr. Charles Knight, who had started his "Knight's Quarterly Magazine" in 1823, and who counted the brilliant young Macaulay and the brilliant young Praed on his staff, had obtained at least one article from De Quincey, and had become personally acquainted with him in July 1824, with a view to more. But a good deal of De Quincey's time in the year 1825 was taken up with a wretched piece of literary business into which he had been lured by his own analysis of the German novel *Walladmor* in the *London Magazine* of October 1824. The said *Walladmor* was a German fabrication, in the shape of a pretended "New Romance by the Author of Waverley," brought out at Leipsic at a time when there was a lull in the production of those real Waverley Novels without which German readers, as well as British, found life insipid. Germany was deceived from end to end by the three-volume substitute for the absent reality. The first copy imported into England having come into De Quincey's hands, he had scribbled his article on it for the magazine as rapidly as he could, with the unfortunate effect that, having hit on some passages of merit and translated them, he was commissioned by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey to translate the whole. When he became better acquainted with the rubbish, he would gladly have been free from the task; but, as that could not be, he took his revenge by treating the affair as a practical joke. He so cut and carved the original, and De Quinceyfied it by insertions and compressions, as to be able to bring out, in the course of 1825, an English *Walladmor* in two volumes, with a prefixed "dedication" of elaborate banter.

And so, from 1821 to 1825, or between De Quincey's

thirty-seventh and his forty-first year, we have the first burst of his magazine articles and cognate publications. If he had come late into the field of literature, he had come into it at last with one advantage. There had been immense, if unintended, preparation; De Quincey's articles, like George Eliot's novels afterwards, had not to be spun out of a vacuum. There can be no doubt, however, that De Quincey's sudden leap into celebrity was due in great part to the peculiar nature of the articles by which he had chosen to introduce himself. There was something almost staggering in the act of self-exposure by which a man consented that he should be known as "The Opium-Eater," not figuratively or fictitiously, as some at first supposed, but with the most positive assurances that his revelations were real excerpts from his own life. The signature of "The Opium-Eater" to any article whatever became thenceforward an attraction. Not that this would have lasted long had there not been recompense in superlative measure in the articles themselves. But who could deny that there was such recompense? Here, evidently, was no common writer, no dullard or hack, but a new man of genius, a new power in English Prose Literature. There was proclamation of the fact in a quarter whence a favourable verdict was then of some value. As early as October 1823 "The Opium-Eater" had been made to figure as a colloquist in Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianæ*; and again, in October 1825, there was a passage in the *Noctes* praising De Quincey as "a man of a million." This, of course, was kindness on Wilson's part; but it was no exaggeration of the current opinion.

What meanwhile, through the four years of his growing celebrity, had De Quincey himself been doing? Though Grasmere was still his nominal headquarters (where indeed

his books and papers had by this time overflowed his own cottage at Townend, and invaded his father-in-law's cottage of Rydal Nab, if not a third cottage adjacent), the clear inference from the records is that from 1821 to 1825 he resided chiefly in London. There is a very interesting note on the subject, though with some exaggeration of the fact, in Bohn's edition of Lowndes's Bibliographer's Manual. "The *Confessions*," Mr. Bohn says, "were written in a "little room at the back of Mr. H. G. Bohn's premises, "No. 4, York Street, Covent Garden, where Mr. De "Quincey resided, in comparative seclusion, for several "years. He had previously lived in the neighbourhood "of Soho Square, and for some years was a frequent "visitor to the shop of Mr. Bohn's father, then the "principal dealer in German books. The writer remembers "that he always seemed to speak in a kind of whisper." From De Quincey's own reminiscences we gather some other particulars. It was during the time of his connexion with the *London Magazine* that he came thoroughly to know Lamb and his sister and saw most of them. They were excessively kind to him, insisting on his coming from his solitary lodgings as often as possible to dine and spend the evening with them; and he describes some of those quiet evenings with the Lambs very tenderly and prettily, testifying the increase of his regard for the good brother and sister the more he knew of their heroic relations to each other, and of their real benevolence. He does not seem to have been frequently at the monthly dinners given by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey to their magazine staff, and at which Lamb, as the chief of the wits round the table, always stuttered and sparkled at his brightest. Barry Cornwall could remember De Quincey's appearance at only one of those dinners, when "the

expression of his face was intelligent, but cramped and somewhat peevish," and when he "was self-involved and did not add to the cheerfulness of the meeting." This may have been at the particular dinner of November 1821 at which, as De Quincey tells us himself, he met Mr. Wainwright among the company, did not like him, and rather wondered why Lamb paid him so much attention. Walks with Hazlitt and little angry discussions with him, and glimpses of young Talfourd and other lights rising or risen on the skirts of Messrs. Taylor and Hessey's literary group, are also to be imagined. The sub-editorial calls at his lodgings by young Thomas Hood, on the "frequent and agreeable duty" of dunning him for copy, must not be forgotten. Then it was, as Hood liked to remember in after-years, that he used to find De Quincey "in the midst of a German Ocean of Literature," his room flooded and plugged with books, and that, invited sometimes to stay, he would listen with amazement to the strange tenant of the rooms far into the small hours. He still retained a memento of those visits, he adds, in the original manuscript of one of De Quincey's papers, exhibiting the stain of "a large purplish ring" where the tumbler of laudanum negus had rested on it. For, in his London solitude, and apparently in 1823-4, the author of the *Confessions*, who had signified that the days of his opium-eating were past, had again succumbed. What with this relapse into his old habit, what with the constant depression of his ill-health, he was again very wretched; and the picture we have to form of him in those days from all the preserved memorials is the very reverse of that which would have been natural in any other case of such suddenly attained literary distinction. Not as a lion in general society or as a frequenter of club-dinners, or even as a man at home of

his own accord in the houses of a few select friends, is the De Quincey of 1821—1825 to be figured, but rather as the confirmed and incurable eccentric, the incarnation of shy nervousness, that he was to be for all the rest of his life. He avoided intercourse with his fellow-creatures as much as he could, and was happy, if he was ever happy, only in solitary afternoon walks about Covent Garden and the Strand, where he could observe passers-by and look into shop-windows, or in longer rambles at night out into unknown suburbs, whence he could return, by silent circuits of roads, to his own book-blocked room and the laudanum negus.

Now, as afterwards, friends and admirers who desired his intimacy had, as it were, to break in upon him. We do hear of one or two such friendly inroads on his comfortless privacy. Thus, in the summer of 1824, Mr. Matthew Davenport Hill sought him out, and roused him not a little. More effective still seems to have been Mr. Charles Knight's acquaintanceship with him, begun, as we have seen, in the interests of "Knight's Quarterly Magazine." Mr. Knight, six years younger than De Quincey, and ardent in literature in those days with even more than the usual ardour of a young publisher, liked nothing better than to get De Quincey to dine with him, or stay with him a while, in his house in Pall Mall East. "O! for an hour of De Quincey!" he wrote years afterwards, in recollection of those evenings in comparison with any he had spent in the interval; and he has handed down several anecdotes illustrative of the incredible helplessness of the little guest whom he and his household so liked to shelter. One day in 1825, Mr. Knight, returning from Windsor, found that De Quincey, whom he had left in his house in Pall Mall East, had departed abruptly, leaving

word that he had gone home to Westmoreland. Knowing that he had intended to go thither, and had only been waiting for a remittance from his mother to "satisfy some clamorous creditors" before he went, Mr. Knight thought nothing of the matter. In a few days, however, he heard that De Quincey was still in town and in a dreadful difficulty. Following the clue to his whereabouts, he found him in a miserable lodging on the Surrey side of the river, his "dreadful difficulty" being that the expected remittance had reached him in the form of a large draft on a London bank payable at twenty-one days' sight, and that he had been informed, on going to Lombard Street, that the draft could not be cashed till the time was up. Too shy to return to Mr. Knight's house and explain why he had come back, he had gone, for accommodation for the twenty-one days, into a hiding-hole where he was really not safe from being robbed; and it was with surprise, as well as delight, that he received Mr. Knight's assurance that the difficulty about the draft was not insuperable, and he might have the cash at once.

Mr. Knight's anecdote fits in but too well with other proofs that one of the causes of De Quincey's moping and evasive habits through the time of his London life was excruciating pecuniary embarrassment. And no wonder. The calculation even now is that a writer for magazines and reviews can hardly, by his utmost industry, unless he is also on the staff of a newspaper, or is exceptionally retained by a fixed engagement, as Southey and Macaulay were, make more than 250*l.* a year. On that hypothesis it is not difficult to compute that all De Quincey's earnings between 1821 and 1825, by the *London Magazine* or whatever else, must have been a poor provision for the expenses of himself in London and of his family at Grasmere. In

fact, however it happened, he was so much in debt, and so hard pressed for money, as to be on this account also desperately miserable. "At this time," he had written to Professor Wilson in Edinburgh on the 24th of February, 1825, "I am quite free from opium; but it has left the "liver, the Achilles' heel of almost every human fabric, "subject to affections which are tremendous for the weight "of wretchedness attached to them. To fence with these "with the one hand, and with the other to maintain the "war with the wretched business of hack-author, with "all its horrible degradations, is more than I am able "to bear. At this moment I have not a place to hide "my head in. Something I meditate,—I know not what ". . . With a good publisher and leisure to premeditate "what I write, I might yet liberate myself: after which, "having paid everybody, I would slink into some dark "corner, educate my children, and show my face in the "world no more." He adds that he may be addressed either "to the care of Mrs. De Quincey, Rydal Nab, Westmoreland," or "to the care of M. D. Hill, Esq., 11, King's Bench Walk, Temple," but that the latter address might be the better, because he would rather not be tracked too precisely at present. Perhaps it was the "large draft" of Mr. Knight's anecdote that cleared the way for the desired return to Westmoreland. Not at this point only in De Quincey's biography has the reader to suspect "remittances from his mother" of which there is no distinct record.

De Quincey was certainly back in Westmoreland before the end of 1825, and in circumstances tolerably easy after his late London experience. "Thank God you are not now domineered over by circumstances, and may your noble nature never more be disturbed but by its own workings!"

we find Wilson writing to him from Edinburgh on the 12th November in that year. The letter, which begins "My dear Plato," speaks of promised contributions by De Quincey to a forthcoming volume of miscellanies which Wilson and Lockhart had projected, under the name of "Janus, or the Edinburgh Literary Almanac." It also adverts to Lockhart's commencing editorship of the *Quarterly Review*, and to the interest De Quincey may have in that event. "He knows your great talents, and will, I know, act in the most gentlemanly spirit to all contributors"; and why should not De Quincey be thinking of a noble article on Kant for the new editor?

Though "Janus" had to appear in the beginning of 1826 without De Quincey's hand in it, Wilson's letter prepares us for the next important stage in his literary life. This was his connexion, through Wilson, with *Blackwood's Magazine*. It began by the publication in the number of that magazine for November 1826 of the first portion of an article on Lessing, entitled *Lessing's Laocoon, translated with Notes*. The second portion appeared in the number for January 1827, and was followed in February 1827 by *The Last Days of Immanuel Kant* and the famous essay *On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts;* and in March 1827 appeared the paper entitled *Toilette of the Hebrew Lady*. After an interval, i.e. in August 1830, there was another paper on Kant, entitled *Kant in his Miscellaneous Essays*.

The connexion with *Blackwood* very naturally drew De Quincey himself once more to Edinburgh. Accordingly, through the years 1827, 1828, and 1829, we find him quite as much in Edinburgh as at Grasmere. He was, of course, no stranger there, but moved about familiarly among such surviving friends of his former visits as were

still resident in the city. Wilson was his mainstay, the man who had known him longest and understood him best, and whose own joviality of disposition made it easier for him than it would have been for most to tolerate the eccentricities of such a weird little son of genius and opium. Wilson's house in Gloucester Place was at De Quincey's disposal when he liked; and one of the best sketches of De Quincey is that by Wilson's daughter, Mrs. Gordon, in her life of her father, where she gives her recollections of the Opium-Eater's troublesome irregularities of habit in the house, the cook's difficulties with him and profound reverence for him, and all the while Wilson's magnanimous laugh at the whole concern. It was at this time too, and indirectly through Wilson, that Carlyle first saw something of De Quincey personally. They met, I think, at the house of one of Wilson's friends; after which there were calls from De Quincey at Comely Bank, where Carlyle and his wife had their Edinburgh home between their marriage in 1826 and their removal to the Dumfriesshire solitude of Craigenputtock in 1828. At first, De Quincey, remembering his review of Carlyle's Translation of Wilhelm Meister, was obviously ill at ease; but, that matter left unmentioned, the meetings seem to have been pleasant enough on both sides. That Carlyle's interest in De Quincey, at all events, was far from small at this time is proved by his long letter from Craigenputtock, of December 11, 1828, inviting De Quincey to visit him and his wife there. "Our warmest welcome, and such solacements as even the desert does not refuse," Carlyle writes, "are at any time and at all times in store for one we love so well"; and, after a humorous description of a possible colony or social college of like-minded spirits on the moors round Craigenputtock, there is the compli-

mentary addition, "Would *you* come hither and be king over us, then indeed we had made a fair beginning, and the *Bog School* might snap its fingers at the *Lake School*." Nearer the end of the letter came these significant words, "Believe it, you are well loved here, and none feels better than I what a spirit is for the present eclipsed in clouds. For the present it can only be; time and chance are for all men; that troublous season will end." Evidently De Quincey's troubles of various kinds were clinging to him in Edinburgh, and Carlyle knew all.

The pecuniary trouble, for one, had not ceased. It was a great thing, doubtless, to be a writer in *Blackwood;* but a few articles in that magazine in the course of four years could not do much toward the support of the man of letters in Edinburgh and of his wife and young ones in the Vale of Grasmere. There was income, doubtless, from other sources,—perhaps from periodicals in London; perhaps from newspapers; and certainly from the *Edinburgh Literary Gazette*, a weekly periodical then of some note in Edinburgh, to which De Quincey contributed occasionally through 1828, 1829, and 1830. But the deficit altogether must have been serious and growing. What was the remedy? Poor as the pastures in Edinburgh were, they were better than were likely to be found anywhere else. His chief existing engagements were there; and nowhere else did farther engagements seem so easy. Why, then, keep up two households, or pretences of a household, one in Edinburgh and one in Westmoreland? Why should not Mrs. De Quincey and her children leave their native vale and be domiciled with De Quincey permanently in Edinburgh? Both De Quincey and his wife were adverse to the idea of leaving Grasmere; but at length, in 1830, apparently on the spur

of some new offer of literary engagement in Edinburgh, the resolution was taken. It was precipitated by the advice of the excellent and sensible Dorothy Wordsworth. In a long letter of Dorothy's to De Quincey, giving him an account of a visit she had paid to his cottage just after her return to Rydal Mount from a tour, she tells him she had found his wife well, but "with something of sadness in her manner" when she spoke of the likelihood of his detention in Edinburgh by a certain new engagement of which she had heard vaguely. Dorothy's reply, she informs De Quincey, had been "Why not settle there, for the time at least that this engagement lasts? Lodgings are cheap in Edinburgh, and provisions and coals not dear." Mrs. De Quincey, having acquiesced, had asked Dorothy to write on the subject to De Quincey; and hence her letter. She there repeats her advice in greater detail, with all delicacy but very practically. The first step taken in the direction of the advice seems to have been the removal of the elder children from Grasmere to Edinburgh; but in 1830 Mrs. De Quincey and the younger children followed. The cottage in Grasmere was nominally retained as De Quincey's for some years more; but from 1830 Edinburgh, and Edinburgh all but alone, was to contain him and his, and their united fortunes, so long as he remained in the world. He was then forty-five years of age, and his wife about two and thirty.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHOLLY IN EDINBURGH: MORE CONTRIBUTIONS TO "BLACKWOOD," WITH ARTICLES IN "TAIT'S MAGAZINE."

1830—1840.

EDINBURGH from 1830 to 1840 was a very excellent place of residence. The indestructible natural beauties of her site and surroundings, the extraordinary combination of dense and antique picturesqueness with modern elegance and spaciousness in the plan and architecture of her streets and slopes, and the wealth of her interesting traditions from the past, were not her only recommendations. A pleasant and varied social activity still characterized her as the metropolis of Scotland, and an unusual number of persons of greater or less note individually moved among her 130,000 or 150,000 inhabitants. Her greatest man, it is true, was lost to her in 1832, when Scott died, and heads could no longer be turned to look at his venerated figure as he limped along Princes Street. But Jeffrey remained, Lord Advocate of Scotland from 1830 to 1834, and thenceforward a Judge with the title of Lord Jeffrey, only ex-editor of the *Edinburgh Review* now, and not writing much more, but still the literary pride of the Edinburgh Whigs. Wilson, on the other hand, as the "Christopher North" of *Blackwood* and the eloquent and adored University Professor, was in his most exuberant prime, Scott's successor, so far as there was one, in the

literary chiefship of Edinburgh Toryism, and the observed of all observers, Whig or Tory, for his lion-like gait and gesture, wild yellow hair, and frequent white hat. Then, among Jeffrey's colleagues or subordinates in the Parliament House, or Wilson's associates in the University, or belonging to both fraternities, or distributed in divers posts and professions through the city, what a miscellany of other local celebrities! Among the lawyers, on the bench or rising to it, were Moncreiff, Cockburn, Patrick Robertson, Rutherfurd, Ivory, and Murray. Among the University Professors, in one or other of the faculties, were Sir William Hamilton (first in the chair of History, and after 1836 in that of Logic and Metaphysics), Dr. Chalmers (brought to Edinburgh in 1828 as Professor of Theology), Dunbar, Pillans, Welsh, Macvey Napier, Jameson, Hope, Monro *tertius*, Sir Charles Bell, Pulteney Alison, Syme, Christison, and (from 1835) George Moir. Conspicuous in science or in medicine out of the University were Dr. Abercrombie, Sir David Brewster, Andrew and George Combe, and others. McCrie, the biographer of Knox, was alive for part of the time; before the ten years were out Candlish and Guthrie were in their Edinburgh pulpits; and those who preferred milder or Episcopalian pastorship could "sit under" the Rev. E. B. Ramsay, afterwards Dean Ramsay, or the Rev. Robert Morehead. There was a flourishing Edinburgh theatre, with the accomplished Mr. Murray as manager and one of the actors, and with Mackay as the non-such in "Bailie Nicol Jarvie," "Caleb Balderstone," and other comic characters in the dramas from Scott's novels. Among resident representatives of the Fine Arts were Sir William Allan, Watson Gordon, Harvey, Duncan, and the recluse and abstruse David Scott; and among resi-

dent, or all but resident, representatives of literature not already mentioned, most of them lawyers and in training for legal posts or professorships, were Thomas Thomson, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, David Laing, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, David Macbeth Moir, Henry Glassford Bell, Archibald Alison, William and Robert Chambers, Ferrier, Spalding, Thomas Aird, Hill Burton, John Thomson Gordon, and William Edmonstoune Aytoun. Lady Nairne, the woman of finest lyric genius Scotland has produced, unless Lady Wardlaw may be compared with her, was living in the near vicinity, her claims to authorship of any kind as yet undivulged; and the best-known literary ladies of Edinburgh were Miss Ferrier and Mrs. Johnstone. The chief newspapers were the *Scotsman*, edited by Mr. Charles Maclaren, and the *Caledonian Mercury*, edited by Dr. James Browne; and the two editors had fought a duel. An event of real importance was the foundation of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* by Messrs. William and Robert Chambers in 1832, superseding the previous literary weeklies of the city, and setting the example of cheapness for all future British periodicals. The Reform Bill agitation for some time, and then the other agitations that grew out of that, provided political hot water in abundance for the ten years; and in no community was the supply kept at a higher temperature. If you lived in Edinburgh between 1830 and 1840, you must be a Whig or a Tory; on one or other of those two stools you were compelled to sit, as by a law of human existence; they would not permit you to try both, or to stand, or to walk about. Further, as the mere mention of the name of Dr. Chalmers will have suggested, that was the time of this great man's energetic leadership in the ecclesiastical politics of Scotland, and of

the beginnings of that ecclesiastical strife which, manifesting itself more fiercely from year to year in the annual General Assemblies of the Kirk in Edinburgh, had its final issue in 1843 in the disruption of the Scottish Establishment.

Such was the Edinburgh within which the English eccentric and visionary was enclosed from his forty-sixth year to his fifty-sixth. We know now what to think of him in his relations to the community in which he had sought refuge. If we set aside Dr. Chalmers, a really great man, cast in nature's largest mould, but not specially a man of letters, and if we set aside also Sir William Hamilton, as less the man of letters than the scholastic thinker, then in all Edinburgh, after Scott's death, with due exception for the uncombed strength and barbaric word-splendours of Christopher North, the most important intellectual figure was the shy little English stranger. It was De Quincey that the real lovers of literature in Edinburgh ought to have sought out, if they wanted to put the very rarest they had amongst them on a pedestal in front of the Register House, to be publicly saluted and gazed at. They did nothing of the kind. It was not known to the vast majority of the inhabitants of Edinburgh that anybody of the name of De Quincey was living among them; and even the young lovers of literature that knew a little about him all but invariably misspelt his name when they wrote it or printed it. The reasons are pretty obvious. Merely as an Englishman, De Quincey was somewhat out of his element. He was in Edinburgh, but not of Edinburgh, a little put out by the Scottish "*Saw*bath," as he used to write it jocularly, and by cognate observances (though in this he had native sympathizers), and not in touch with any part of the

municipal tumult around him. But much more was his social insignificance owing to the fact that he was simply De Quincey. By temperament and habit he was a creature evasive of all publicity, a "fantastical duke of dark corners"; and he had seen too many specimens of literary eminence already, in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others, to have much passion left for such new literary acquaintanceships as Edinburgh might afford. In fact, he did not care very much where he was, if only people would not ask him out to dinner, but would leave him alone with his books, his manuscripts, and his opium.

The literary industry of De Quincey through the ten years is represented mainly by the list of his continued contributions to *Blackwood*, and by a series of contributions to another Edinburgh monthly, called *Tait's Magazine*. In *Blackwood* for 1831 appeared *Dr. Parr and his Contemporaries, or Whiggism in its Relations to Literature;* in the same magazine, under the title of *The Cæsars*, there was begun, in October 1832, a series of articles on Roman History which extended over four subsequent numbers; in November 1832 appeared the article entitled *Charlemagne;* and in April 1833 appeared *The Revolution of Greece*. There was then an interruption of four years; but in July 1837 appeared the long narrative paper called *Revolt of the Tartars;* which was followed in 1838 by *Household Wreck* and *Modern Greece*, and in 1839 by *Casuistry* and *Dinner, Real and Reputed*. The year 1840 was marked by the production of the series of papers entitled *The Essenes*, the articles entitled *Alleged Plagiarisms of Coleridge* and *Modern Superstition*, and the series on *Style and Rhetoric*.—Meanwhile De Quincey had been contributing also to *Tait*, a magazine which had been started by an Edinburgh bookseller in 1832 on

advanced Whig principles in politics, but perfectly open and unfettered in all literary respects. It was in February 1834, just at the time of the break with *Blackwood* noted above, that *Tait* began to astonish its readers by *Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater.* The series ran on, sometimes with explanatory sub-titles, through the rest of 1834 and through 1835 and 1836; and, even after the connexion with *Blackwood* was resumed in 1837, *Tait* was able to entertain its readers for three years more with new instalments of the same. The Sketches, indeed, extending over about thirty articles in all, contain that Autobiography of De Quincey the republished portions of which in the English edition of his Collected Works form, together with *The Confessions*, the most frequently read volumes of the collection. No portions of the series attracted greater attention at the time, or excited more wrath in certain quarters, than the digressions upon the recently dead Coleridge and the still living Wordsworth and Southey. Carlyle has told us how Southey in particular, when he first met him, flamed up on the mention of De Quincey's name, averring that it would be but a proper service to good manners if some one were to go to Edinburgh and thrash the little wretch; and we hear elsewhere of the offence taken also by the Wordsworths and by members of the Coleridge family. Yet, as Carlyle seems to have thought, the complaints were excessive. The amount of personal gossip in the papers was much less than we have been accustomed to since; the "vivisection," what little there was of it, was avowedly for scientific purposes; and no one could deny the generosity of the general estimates. The admiration expressed for Coleridge and Wordsworth all in all, indeed, went beyond

what the world even then was willing to accord; and it may be doubted whether we have yet in our literature any more interesting accounts of the philosopher and the poet than those admiring, but sharp-sighted, papers. They and the rest of the articles in the same series were, at all events, most acceptable when they appeared in the pages of *Tait*. There were, however, contributions of an independent kind to the same pages, the most important being *A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism*, in 1835 and 1836. The average amount of De Quincey's contributions to the two magazines jointly through the ten years was about six articles every year. During the same period he wrote the articles *Goethe*, *Pope*, *Shakespeare*, and *Schiller*, for the seventh edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, edited by Mr. Macvey Napier; and there may have been other contributions to minor periodicals. Moreover, during the same period he had produced one of the only two specimens of his powers given to the world originally in the book form. This was his *Klosterheim, or the Masque*, a romance, published by Blackwood, in a duodecimo volume, in 1832.

De Quincey's domestic life in Edinburgh through a period of such marked literary industry is involved in considerable obscurity. We learn incidentally that he was a guest in Wilson's house in Gloucester Place for some time continuously in 1830-31; we hear of a largish furnished house or set of apartments in Great King Street taken by him for himself and his family in 1831; and we hear further that there were removals to Forres Street, still in the New Town, and to the village of Duddingston, an outskirt of the Old Town, at the back of Arthur Seat. Perhaps there were other shiftings and burrowings. In general, all that is clear is that there was

a succession of domiciles, with always one room in each where, amidst a chaos of books and papers on the floor, chairs, and tables, the indefatigable little scholar could pursue his studies, penning his articles, one after another, in his peculiarly neat small hand, on the little bit of space kept free for the purpose on the table at which he principally sat. For additional particulars we are indebted to the recollections of one of his daughters and to some of the preserved family letters. They present De Quincey to us very touchingly in some of his family relations. The gentlest of human beings, incapable of a word that could wound the feelings of any one near him, and indeed morbidly humble and deferential in his style of address to persons of every rank, though the uniform ornateness of his English caused a kind of awe of him among Scottish servants, he watched his children and moved among them with a doting attention, in which there was much of the edifying, while there was nothing of the authoritative. They grew up in a kind of wondering regard for their father and his ways, insensibly imbibing refinement from the little atmosphere of high tastes which, with whatever appurtenances of disorder and discomfort, his bookish and studious habits kept around them, and receiving an education of no ordinary kind from his supervision of their lessons and his discursive fireside talk. The earliest recollections of the daughter who has been mentioned were of evenings when, to still her crying in the nursery, her father would fetch her in his arms into his own warm room, place her in a chair for the supreme delight of "sitting up with papa," and, after petting her with sips of well-sugared coffee, give her a book and paper-cutter with which to amuse herself while he went on with his writing. He instructed her, she remembered, even thus early, in

the art of cutting the leaves of books without making ragged edges. Of his eldest son, William, he was the sole tutor, bestowing on the task of his education all that "care and hourly companionship" could do, and with such effect that the boy could show, at the age of sixteen, in proof of his scholarship, "not merely an Etonian skill in the management of Greek metres," but also an original commentary on Suetonius. Of the opium-eating meanwhile all we know is that, though found indispensable, it had been, for the most part, brought within bounds.

Three family bereavements fell with heavy effect amid the occupations and changes of residence of those ten years. The first was the death by fever, in 1833, of De Quincey's youngest son, Julius, in the fifth year of his age. The next was the death, in 1835, at the age of not quite eighteen, of the above-mentioned eldest son, William, —"my first-born child, the crown and glory of my life," as the poor father wrote afterwards. Then, in 1837, came the death of the wife and mother herself, the poor Margaret Simpson from Grasmere, whose lot it had been to marry this strange man of genius one and twenty years before, and to accompany him thus far. One can suppose that hers had not been the easiest or the happiest of lives. "Delicate health and family cares," says her daughter, "made her early withdraw from society; but she seems to have had a powerful fascination for the few friends she admitted to her intimacy." One of these used to tell the daughters that he had "never seen a more gracious or a more beautiful lady"; and it was a standing form of rebuke to them by an old Scotch charwoman, who had been much in the house, and continued to usurp some dominion over them, that none of them would ever be the brave woman that their mother was. That is all we

know of the dalesman's daughter from Grasmere who died among alien folk in Edinburgh at the age of about thirty-nine, save that they buried her in the West Churchyard, or Churchyard of St. Cuthbert's, beside the children that had gone before her.

There can hardly have been a more helpless widowerhood than that of De Quincey, left in his fifty-second year with six children, the eldest a girl yet in her teens. For two or three years our vision of him and his in their domestic conditions in Edinburgh is an absolute blur, save that we learn that in 1838 he took a lodging for himself at No. 42, Lothian Street, that he might have a separate place for his books and literary labours. But necessity had developed a beautiful power of prudence and self-help among the orphans; and the eldest girl, Margaret, and the next to her in age, Horace, putting their young heads together, struck out a plan. With their father's consent, they took a cottage called Mavis Bush, near Lasswade, about seven miles out of Edinburgh, where they and the four younger ones could live more quietly and economically than in the town, and to which their father could retreat when he wanted retirement. This was in 1840; from which date, on through all the rest of De Quincey's life, the cottage at Lasswade is to be conceived as his chief abode, though without prejudice to the possibility of other refuges and camping-grounds, as the whim occurred to him, in Edinburgh or elsewhere.

CHAPTER IX.

LASSWADE AND EDINBURGH, WITH VISITS TO GLASGOW: MORE CONTRIBUTIONS TO "BLACKWOOD" AND "TAIT."

1840—1849.

THE name "The Cottage at Lasswade" is somewhat misleading. Lasswade is a village of some extent, reached most directly from Edinburgh by the road through the suburb called Newington and thence over the heights of Liberton and Liberton church, and is situated very prettily and picturesquely on the river Esk, at a point where that river has just left the still more picturesque and celebrated beauties of Hawthornden and the glen of Roslin. But Mavis Bush Cottage, now styled in the County Directory "De Quincey Villa," is not in Lasswade, but about a mile and a half beyond it, near the foot of a bye-road which descends, by a steep and winding declivity, to that hollow of the Esk which contains Polton Mills and the small Polton railway-station. Though too deep-sunk in the hollow for much cheerfulness of immediate outlook, it is a snug enough little cottage, with its face direct to the road and its bit of garden-ground behind, and with a few other houses about it, above or beneath, on the same slope. The country round is beautifully hilly, with varied and pleasant walks, especially pathways by the sides of the river or up and down its overhanging and well-wooded banks. The interior of the cottage, when lit up in the

evenings, must have been invitingly cosy in its plain elegance in the days when it was De Quincey's. "Our dwelling," he writes to Miss Mitford in 1842, "is a little "cottage, containing eight rooms only, one of which (the "largest), on what is called in London the first floor, is "used as a drawing-room, and one, about half the size, on "the ground floor, as a dining-room, but for a party of ten "people at most." He goes on to explain that there were two servants, and that communication with the post-office at Lasswade was intermittent and difficult.

For the present we are concerned only with the first nine years of De Quincey's tenancy of this cottage at Lasswade or Polton, i.e. with the period between 1840 and 1849, bringing him from his fifty-sixth year to his sixty-fifth. And, first of all, as has been already stipulated, the conception of him as located at Lasswade during those nine years has to be corrected by the fact that he was there only when he chose. Freak, or the supposed necessities of his literary work, occasioned pretty frequent removals from Lasswade to lodgings in Edinburgh and elsewhere. How many different rooms in various places he thus occupied in the course of the nine years no one has ascertained; but, as each in turn was "snowed up" by an accumulation of the books and papers he was using for the time, and as, in his morbid terror lest these should be lost, it was usual for him, in leaving any lodging, to entrust the accumulated deposit to the landlady, he is known to have had sometimes the rents of "at least four separate sets of lodgings" all running on simultaneously. It may be well to collect the particulars of his movements, from Lasswade and back to it, through the nine years, so far as the records will serve.

While most of those with whom he had relations were in

Edinburgh, there was an attraction also to Glasgow in an acquaintanceship he had formed with two of the Professors of Glasgow University. These were Mr. J. P. Nichol, Professor of Astronomy, a man of fine genius, and the modest and scholarly Mr. E. L. Lushington, Professor of Greek. Accordingly, for perhaps the greater part of the two years from March 1841 to June 1843, De Quincey was in Glasgow as the guest of one or the other of these two friends, or in lodgings beside them. His first Glasgow lodgings were in the High Street, opposite to the Old College; but they were exchanged for rooms at 79 Renfield Street. These last were retained and paid for until as late as 1847. From his return from Glasgow in June 1843, he seems, with the exception of a plunge now and then into some unascertainable lodging in Edinburgh, to have resided steadily at Lasswade. And not without reason. His eldest son Horace, having gone into the army as an officer in the 26th Cameronians, had died in China, of malarious fever, in the end of 1842, after having served in the Chinese campaign under Sir Hugh Gough; his third son, Paul Frederick, had gone out to India as an officer in the 70th Queen's regiment; and his second son, Francis, was in Manchester for the time, as clerk in a commercial house. The three daughters being thus all of the family left at Lasswade, De Quincey was bound to be with them as much as possible. Nothing can be prettier than his account to Miss Mitford of their life there together and his description of his daughters. "They live," he says, "in the most absolute harmony I have ever witnessed. "Such a sound as that of dissension in any shade or "degree I have not once heard issuing from their lips. "And it gladdens me beyond measure that all day long I "hear from their little drawing-room intermitting sounds

"of gaiety and laughter, the most natural and spontaneous. "Three sisters more entirely loving to each other, and "more unaffectedly drawing their daily pleasures from "sources that will always continue to lie in their power, "viz. books and music, I have not either known or heard "of." So through 1844, 1845, and 1846, but with the variation caused in the household by the return, in 1845, of the son Francis from Manchester, to exchange his prospects in commerce for the study of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. The exchange was not without its difficulties, for the young man had to walk from Lasswade to Edinburgh every day to attend the classes; but it gave De Quincey the pleasant additional occupation of inquiring into his son's progress and coaching him for some of his examinations. Then there were pleasant acquaintanceships with some of the Lasswade neighbours, with drives now and then of the father and daughters to town together, and the still more frequent reception of friends and admirers of De Quincey who made their way to Lasswade to pay him their respects. In 1847 there was another long absence in Glasgow, extending from January to October. During part of the time his daughters were on a visit, the first in their lives, to their father's surviving relatives in the West of England; and some letters of his show a lively interest in their reported movements amid the scenes and persons that had been so familiar to himself in his earlier days, and a special pleasure in the fact that they had met Mr. Walter Savage Landor. Through 1848 and 1849 all the family were together again at Lasswade, with no other break in the routine there than might be caused by De Quincey's incurable passion for hiding himself at his option now and then in some Edinburgh lodging.

An important matter all this while, as in every preceding period of De Quincey's existence, had been the state of his health. It may be doubted whether the majority of those interested in him have had any adequate conception of that extreme fragility of body, that complexity of bodily pains and ailments, with which, even apart from the opium, he had to contend all his life. Connected with his main malady,—that malady into which all his inherited or acquired ailments had coalesced and settled from an early stage of his youth, and which the medical authorities are disposed to define as "gastrodynia" or severe gastric neuralgia, accompanied by "a low inflammatory condition of the mucous coat of the stomach, proceeding at times to ulceration,"—there was a specific inability to live by the ordinary forms of nutriment. His teeth had gone; he "did not know what it was to eat a dinner"; his message in 1847 to an old schoolfellow, by way of jocular apology for never having renewed their old acquaintance by letter, was that he had not once dined "since shaking hands with him in the eighteenth century." A little soup, tea, cocoa, coffee, or other fluid, with a sop of bread, or more rarely an inch or two of mutton or hare, kept to the extreme of tenderness, and cut finically for easy mastication, formed De Quincey's diet. In the management even of this there was incessant cause of nervous irritation. Add the glooms and phrenzies growing out of the indulgence in opium to which he had so long been habituated. In this matter there had been ups and downs within our present period, according to the varying degrees of his suffering from his independent malady, but also according to the fluctuations of his reasonings for and against the drug. The chief crisis, marked as such by De Quincey himself in a kind

of diary of notes and jottings at the time, had been in the year 1844. In some new access of accumulated wretchedness, mental and physical, when a horror of the most hideous blackness seemed once more to be "travelling over the disc of his life," he had rioted again with the fiend and exulted in 5000 daily drops of the liquid damnation. The rebound towards self-retrieval, as it is chronicled in his jottings, had cost him efforts incredible. He had experimented in reductions of the dose and even in the torture of total abstinence; and, his feet having failed him for his ordinary pedestrian exercise in the roads between Lasswade and Edinburgh, he had compelled himself to shuffle round and round the garden of his Lasswade cottage in a measured circuit of forty-four yards, so as to accomplish in that way his ten miles a day. Unexpectedly, these efforts had succeeded; and, with an allowance ranging from 100 drops a day upwards, he had recovered in 1844 the faculty of living on. In 1848 there had been another crisis, but less formidable; and from that date, we are given to understand, his wrestlings with opium were at an end. Having ascertained the very minimum of the drug on which existence was endurable in his own case, he kept to that as much as possible through the rest of his life, and saw no use in troubling himself with further experimentation.

De Quincey's literary labours during the nine years had still been chiefly in contributions to *Blackwood* and *Tait*. To *Blackwood* his chief contributions had been as follows:—In 1841, *The Secret Societies of Asia*, *Plato's Republic*, *Traits and Tendencies of German Literature* (?), *Homer and the Homeridæ* (three parts); in 1842, *Philosophy of Herodotus*, *The Pagan Oracles*, *Cicero*, *Ricardo made Easy* (three parts), *Benjamin of Tudela* (?); in

1844, *Greece under the Romans;* in 1845, *Coleridge and Opium-Eating*, and *Suspiria de Profundis, being a Sequel to the Confessions of an Opium-Eater* (three successive articles, with sub-titles); and, in 1849, *The English Mail-Coach*, and *The Vision of Sudden Death*. To *Tait* there seem to have been no contributions between 1841 and 1845; but in this latter year the series in that magazine was renewed in an article on *Wordsworth's Poetry*, followed by another *On the Temperance Movement*, and by several papers under the general title of *Notes on Gilfillan's Gallery of Literary Portraits*. These last, treating of Godwin, Hazlitt, Shelley, Keats, &c., were continued into 1846,—in which year also appeared two papers on *The Antigone of Sophocles*, occasioned by a dramatic performance at Edinburgh by Miss Helen Faucit, two on *Christianity considered as an Organ of Political Movement*, one entitled *Glance at the Works of Mackintosh*, and one entitled *System of the Heavens as revealed by Lord Rosse's Telescope*. To these succeeded, in 1847, *Notes on Walter Savage Landor*, *Joan of Arc* (two papers), *Schlosser's Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, *Milton versus Southey and Landor*, *Orthographic Mutineers*, *The Spanish Military Nun* (three papers), and two papers on *Protestantism*, completed by a third in February 1848. When we add that De Quincey had some connexion during a portion of the nine years with a Glasgow newspaper, and that his *Logic of Political Economy* (now included in his Collected Works) was first published in separate book-form by Messrs. Blackwood in 1844, it will be seen that his literary industry through the period had continued very vigorous indeed. Through the greater part of the nine years the chief

stimulus, as before, had been actual need of money; but, towards the end of the period there had been a considerable abatement of the urgency of this particular motive by the falling-in of legacies from his uncle, his mother, or other relatives. Particulars are not given; but one infers, from hints in the published family letters, that the year 1847 was a marked turning-point of relief for the brain-worn veteran in this respect.

The brain-worn veteran! The phrase does not imply that there were yet any signs in him of mental decrepitude. On the contrary, as the titles of some of the articles in the last paragraph will have suggested, the sexagenarian De Quincey was still in the full perfection of his wonderful powers. Whatever might have been the case seventeen years before, when he first settled permanently in Edinburgh, it would have been no wonder now if the community of that city had learnt to think of him as one of the few worthiest among them *digito monstrari* as he passed in their streets. It had not come quite to that length in De Quincey's case,—the peculiar nature of his celebrity not making him liable to any such rush of popular and day-light recognition as gathered round Wilson or Chalmers, but coupling him rather with such a similar recluse and late burner of the lamp as the philosophic Hamilton. Still, for all in Edinburgh who had any special passion for literature, or thought they had, De Quincey from 1845 onwards was most emphatically one of the "characters" of the place. He was talked of and gossiped about at dinner-tables and tea-tables, and to see him, even by stratagem, was worth an effort. As it was the chance of the present writer to be in the vicinity for a part of the precise time mentioned (from

December 1844 to May 1847), he will here set down, as authentically as he can, first what he then heard, and next what trifle he saw, of the little local wonder.

The rumours about De Quincey were invariably to the effect that his eccentricity, his difference from other mortals, passed all bounds of belief or conception. The form of his eccentricity generally reported first was the absolute uncertainty of his whereabouts at that particular time, arising from his evasiveness on the subject of his lodgings when he was last seen, or intimation from him that, having changed his lodgings, he was in the distressing predicament of having an adversary in pursuit of him in the shape of a former landlady. This suspiciousness of being pursued had become an ingrained habit of De Quincey's mind, and accounted for much of his conduct. It connected itself with his astounding incompetence in money-matters. In that department of practice the abstract political economist, so profound in Ricardo, was helpless as an infant. He gave away money right and left when he had it, and was then the prince of almoners for sorners and beggars; but he was constantly running aground himself. The reports of him in this respect agreed pretty uniformly in the idea that his difficulties did not necessarily arise from want of money, but only, or often, from want of a particular sum required at a particular moment and inability in all ordinary processes for converting the potential into the actual. Mr. Hill Burton gives an Edinburgh illustration of about our present date which reminds one of Mr. Charles Knight's story of the bank-draft in London in the year 1825. One night very late, he tells us, De Quincey, arriving at a friend's door, and having obtained admission with difficulty, explained, with all the skill and pathos of his beautiful rhetoric, that it was absolutely essential he

should be provided at once with 7*s.* 6*d.* On perceiving surprise on his friend's face, he proceeded to explain that he had a document in his possession the transference of which to his friend's care would probably obviate his hesitation; and then, after rummaging in his pockets, and fetching a miscellany of small articles out of them, he produced at last a crumpled piece of paper, which he tendered as security. It was a 50*l.* note; and his friend's impression was that, if he had kept the note in exchange for the 7*s.* 6*d.*, he would have heard no more of the transaction, and indeed that, before coming to his door, De Quincey had been trying to negotiate the exchange at a series of shops, and had failed only through extreme scepticism on the part of the shopkeepers. From these reports of the mysteriousness of De Quincey's usual whereabouts, and his tendency to come to light only occasionally in the straits of some dilemma, it was a natural inference that a meeting with him in any ordinary social way was not a matter of easy arrangement. A promise from him, you were told, was of no use: the party might meet, expecting him; but, ten to one, De Quincey would not be there. There was, however, a science of the ways and means of getting at De Quincey; in which science, according to experts, the method of surest efficacy was to commission some one to find him out and bring him. Then, if precaution made escape impossible, he would come meekly and unresistingly. But in what guise would he come? What a question for endless speculation this was may be guessed from Mr. Hill Burton's account of his appearance at one important dinner-party, to which he had been lured by such deep-laid pretences that he came without convoy. "The festivities of the afternoon are far on when a "commotion is heard in the hall as if some dog or other

"stray animal had forced his way in. The instinct of a "friendly guest tells him of the arrival: he opens the door "and fetches in the little stranger. What can it be? A "street-boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's "duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, "and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the "fragments of a particoloured belcher handkerchief; on "his feet are list shoes, covered with snow, for it is a "stormy winter-night; and the trousers!—some one sug- "gests that they are mere linen garments blackened with "writing-ink, but that Papaverius never would have been "at the trouble so to disguise them. What can be the "theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the "world,—it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest "at hand. Had chance thrown to him a court single- "breasted coat, with a bishop's apron, a kilt, and top- "boots, in these he would have made his entry." Dressed in whatever fashion, he was still De Quincey, and you were glad to have him. For as to the magic of his talk, its sweet and subtle ripple of anecdote and suggestion, its witching splendour when he rose to his highest, the reports were unanimous and enthusiastic. No conceivable intellectual treat, you were told, was equal to a fortunate evening with De Quincey. Only, you were pretty sure to hear, there might be one drawback. Whether from the stimulus of opium or not, he was apt to be at his best when it was rapidly becoming to-morrow and his companions had to think of going. Having got your De Quincey, you might thus find yourself face to face with the problem how to get rid of him. Generally it solved itself by his going at last with the rest, steering himself no one knew whither through the starlight or darkness; but sometimes, you were told, on polite inducement, he would remain where

he was, and then the visit of an evening might extend itself to unknown dimensions.

Such were the reports one heard about De Quincey before seeing him. My own few glimpses of him, I am bound to add, did not present him to me in any such extreme of helplessness as the reports had prepared me to expect. Here are the facts, as I have already printed them elsewhere :—"The first time I saw De Quincey was "most pleasantly one evening in a room high up in one "of the tall houses of the Old Town. He came in charge "of a strong, determined man, who took all the necessary "trouble. There were but few present, and all went on "nicely. In addition to the general impression of "diminutiveness and fragility, one was struck with the "peculiar beauty of his head and forehead, rising dis-"proportionately high over his small wrinkly visage and "gentle deep-set eyes. In his talk, which was in the "form of really harmonious and considerate colloquy, and "not at all in that of monologue, I remember chiefly two "incidents. The birthday of some one present having been "mentioned, De Quincey immediately said 'O, that is the "anniversary of the battle of So-and-So'; and he seemed "ready to catch as many birthdays as might be thrown "him on the spot, and almanack them all round in a "similar manner from his memory. The other incident "was his use of a phrase very beautiful in itself, and "which seemed characteristic of his manner of thinking. "Describing some visionary scene or other, he spoke of it "as consisting of 'discs of light and interspaces of gloom'; "and I noticed that, with all the fine distinctness of the "phrase, both optical and musical, it came from him with "no sort of consciousness of its being out of the way in "talk, and with no reference whatever to its being

"appreciated or not by those around him, but simply "because, whoever might be listening, he would be thinking "as De Quincey. That evening passed; and, though I "saw him once or twice again, it is the last sight of him "that I remember next best. It must have been, I think, "in 1846, on a summer afternoon. A friend, a stranger "in Edinburgh, was walking with me in one of the "pleasant, quiet country lanes near the town. Meeting "us, and the sole moving thing in the lane besides our-"selves, came a small figure, not untidily dressed, but with "his hat pushed up far in front over his forehead, and "hanging on his hind-head, so that the back rim must "have been resting on his coat-collar. At a little distance "I recognised it to be De Quincey; but, not considering "myself entitled to interrupt his meditations, I only "whispered the information to my friend, that he might "not miss what the look at such a celebrity was worth. "So we passed him, giving him the wall. Not un-"naturally, however, after he passed, we turned round for "the pleasure of a back view of the wee intellectual "wizard. Whether my whisper and our glances had "alarmed him, as a ticket-of-leave man might be rendered "uneasy in his solitary walk by the scrutiny of two passing "strangers, or whether he had some recollection of me "(which was likely enough, as he seemed to forget no-"thing), I do not know; but we found that he too had "stopped and was looking round at us. Apparently "scared at being caught doing so, he immediately wheeled "round again, and hurried his pace towards a side-turning "from the lane, into which he disappeared, his hat still "hanging on the back of his head. That was my last "sight of De Quincey."

Those walks of De Quincey in the environs of Edin-

burgh ought to linger still among the memories of the legend-loving town. The particular walk just mentioned was in daylight, and the meeting was in the quiet lane or road by which, avoiding the great Dean Road, one wends towards the Corstorphines and Craigcrook. Jeffrey was then alive, and resident at Craigcrook ; but it is quite impossible that De Quincey had been calling on Jeffrey. His walks were in all directions, for his own purposes of exercise or recreation only, and at his own sweet will. By preference also, and in the proportion of many to one, the longest of them were nocturnal. It is strange yet to think of the little figure in those weary wanderings of his round and through the city evening after evening, now on his way from Lasswade inwards over the darkening heights and hollows to the Old Town, now along the glittering chasm of Princes Street or the gloomier regularity of George Street, now down by the northern suburbs to the levels of the Firth at Granton, now by a daring meander eastwards to the deserted ghastliness of Leith Pier and the skeleton array of masts and shipping, and always, or often, with the penance of the returning zigzag somehow to Lasswade and the cottage on the Esk. It was his custom, we are told, in these nocturnal rambles, and chiefly for his convenience in certain intricate labyrinths of pathway about the Esk, with a foot-bridge or two in them, to carry a small lantern, with the means of lighting it when he chose. What a trial to the nerves of the hardiest belated tramp, or other night-bird, with any dread of the supernatural, to have come upon De Quincey in such a spot, striking his match by a bush, or advancing through the trees with his bull's-eye ! He himself was perfectly fearless of night-bird or demon. Night was his natural element ; what could it bring forth that should alarm

him? Sometimes, we are informed, though without production of the evidence, he would not care to return home at all, but would lie down for rest and shelter anywhere. Edinburgh, therefore, in preserving her legends about the De Quincey who honoured her with so much of his life, has to remember, it seems, unless rumour has been too inventive, that not only were his footsteps familiar with every mile of road round her, but sometimes he would bivouac in a wayside wood in her neighbourhood, or on a spur of the Braids or the Pentlands, canopied only by the constellations.

The danger is that, in dwelling so much on the eccentricities of De Quincey, it should be forgotten that all the while the cottage at Lasswade was really his home. It was there that he would have been detained always by those dearest to him; and it was there, in fact, with all allowance for his wanderings and fugitations, that he did spend most of his time. Very soon, if left to himself, he would have taken possession of every room in the house, one after another, and "snowed up" each with his papers; but, that having been gently prevented, he had one room to work in all day and all night to his heart's content. The evenings, or the intervals between his daily working-time and his nightly working-time or stroll, he generally spent in the drawing-room with his daughters, either alone or in company with any friends that chanced to be with them. At such times, we are told, he was unusually charming. "The newspaper was brought out, "and he, telling in his own delightful way, rather than "reading, the news, would, on questions from this one or "that one of the party, often including young friends of "his children, neighbours, or visitors from distant places, "illuminate the subject with such a wealth of memories,

"of old stories, of past or present experiences, of humour, "of suggestion, even of prophecy, as by its very wealth "makes it impossible to give any taste of it." The description is by one of his daughters; and she adds a touch which is inimitable in its fidelity and tenderness. "He was not," she says, "a reassuring man for nervous "people to live with, as those nights were exceptions on "which he did not set something on fire, the commonest "incident being for some one to look up from book or "work to say casually, *Papa, your hair is on fire;* of "which a calm *Is it, my love?* and a hand rubbing out "the blaze was all the notice taken." The music, which was so frequently a part of those indoor pleasures, and the variations of the character of the evenings now and then by the presence of distinguished visitors, British or American, may easily be imagined. What has chiefly to be borne in mind, we repeat, is that, at the centre of all De Quincey's Bohemian roamings, real and reputed, there was this home of warmth and comfort for him on the banks of the Esk, and that it may be seen by those who feel an interest in him to this day. The quickest way is to take the rail from Edinburgh to the Polton station; but the best is to go to Lasswade, and thence to walk the mile and a half extra that bring one to the spot.

CHAPTER X.

LASSWADE, AND NO. 42 LOTHIAN STREET, EDINBURGH: THE COLLECTED WORKS: LAST DAYS OF DE QUINCEY.

1849—1859.

In 1845 there had been started, by Mr. James Hogg, an enterprising Edinburgh bookseller, a new cheap periodical, called *Hogg's Weekly Instructor*. The periodical had been going on for three years, and had entered on a "new series" in 1848. It was in the autumn of 1849, when some accident had caused the removal of the printing-offices to temporary premises in the suburb of Edinburgh called Canonmills, that Mr. Hogg, attending to some matters there, was told that a stranger wanted to speak to him. "Going down," says Mr. Hogg, "I was confronted "by a noticeably small figure, attired in a capacious gar- "ment, which was much too large, and which served the "purpose of both undercoat and overcoat." It was, in fact, De Quincey, who had come to offer an article for the *Instructor*. Mr. Hogg, having ascertained who his visitor was, very naturally accepted the article at once; whereupon it was produced from an inner pocket of the capacious great-coat, and handed to Mr. Hogg, but not till De Quincey had produced from the same pocket a small handbrush and carefully brushed the manuscript. Finding he had come all the way from Lasswade, Mr. Hogg asked him how he was to get back. He would walk, as usual,

he said. It was now about six o'clock, and he would be home before nine.

This call on Mr. Hogg at Canonmills turned out of no small importance in De Quincey's biography. Whether it had been occasioned by any knowledge on De Quincey's part that his connexion with *Blackwood* and *Tait* was coming to an end, or merely by a wish to have a weekly periodical also at hand for the reception of smaller odds and ends from his pen, certain it is that from 1849 the new connexion all but superseded every other. There are no known contributions by De Quincey to *Blackwood* after 1849; his only known contribution to *Tait* after that date was a paper in three instalments, in 1851, entitled *Lord Carlisle on Pope;* and, though *The North British Review* is said to have counted De Quincey among its contributors, his literary exertions in any such quarter were but asides from his occupations for Mr. Hogg. Not, of course, that these occupations consisted in mere contributorship to *Hogg's Instructor.* That periodical, whether under its original name, which it retained till 1856, or under the more appalling name of TITAN, which it adopted in 1857, did indeed receive bright occasional contributions from De Quincey. The most notable were a short sketch of *Professor Wilson* in 1850, an article on *Sir William Hamilton* in three portions in 1852, a paper on *California* in 1852, and one on *China* in 1857. But what were a few stray articles in an Edinburgh weekly for the last ten years of such a life as De Quincey's? How had it come to pass, in fact, that a man for whose articles all editors and all publishers in the British Islands, had they been really deep in their craft, ought to have been competing, had found it necessary, in his sixty-fifth year, to pay that call at Canonmills with a

manuscript in his pocket, and solicit, almost as a mendicant, the acceptance of it for the columns of a struggling Edinburgh weekly? That mystery resolves itself into the more general mystery of the origin of stupidity; but the call at Canonmills had at least one result more fortunate than the opening for De Quincey of another small source of wages by periodical-writing in his old age. Mr. Hogg, having to see his new contributor again and again, conceived a possible expansion of their connexion. Why should he not bring out, under De Quincey's own editorial supervision, a collective edition of De Quincey's Works? True, it had been announced that the scheme had been already entertained in some quarters and given up as hopeless; true, it was the uniform representation to Mr. Hogg by his brothers in business that, if he did begin the enterprise with De Quincey's consent, it would break down after a volume or two, through De Quincey's unpunctuality and incapacity for continuous labour. "I will risk it," said Mr. Hogg to himself; and he did. It seems to have been in 1850 that the resolution was taken, though the preparations were not begun till some time later.

Meanwhile the same idea had occurred to the American publishing firm of Messrs. Ticknor and Fields of Boston. In America, almost always in advance of the mother-country in such matters, it had been perceived long ago that De Quincey was one of the chief English Classics. There had been popular American reprints already of individual pieces of his; and it was Mr. Fields himself that now undertook the task of seeking out his scattered articles in British periodicals and collecting and arranging them in proper form. For this first American edition of De Quincey's works, begun in 1851, and completed in 1855 in twenty volumes, the publishers obtained some

assistance from De Quincey while it was in progress; and it is remembered to their credit that they made him a participator in the profits to a handsome extent. The Boston edition of the works, however, was not to interfere with Mr. Hogg's projected Edinburgh edition; which, indeed, was to differ from the Boston edition very considerably. Less complete in some respects, inasmuch as De Quincey was to omit from it articles that are kept in the Boston edition, and was to diminish the bulk of the matter on certain subjects by fusing separate articles in some cases into one, it was, on the other hand, to be more perfect, in so far as it was to receive the author's own revision throughout, with modifications and extensions in the course of the revision.

To get rid of that matter at once, it may be stated that, when the first volume of the Edinburgh edition did appear in 1853, it appeared as the first volume of a series the general title of which was to be *Selections Grave and Gay, from writings published and unpublished, by Thomas De Quincey*, and that this general title was maintained till the issue of the fourteenth volume of the series (the last to which it was carried by Mr. Hogg) in 1860. On the whole, it is to be regretted now that De Quincey did not, for this edition, simply collect his writings, and publish them in the chronological order of their first appearance or their composition, with a note of date and place to each. Next best would have been an assortment of the papers into sets of volumes according to a classification of their subjects. No one was more capable of such a classification than De Quincey; but, unfortunately, he had no complete preserved collection of his printed papers by him, or of the periodicals containing them. The American edition, coming over to him in suc-

cessive volumes, was his greatest help; but, till it was complete, and sometimes even then, he had to rummage for his old papers, or employ Mr. Hogg to rummage for him, hurriedly squeezing together what was readiest at intervals, to make up a volume when the press became ravenous. Hence the most provoking jumble in the contents of the fourteen volumes,—mixed kinds of matter in the same volume, and dispersion of the same kinds of matter over volumes wide apart, and yet all with a pretence of grouping and with factitious sub-titles invented for the separate volumes on the spur of the moment. Much of this has been remedied in the later issues of the same Edinburgh edition by Messrs. A. and C. Black, who acquired the property in 1862. Two volumes have been added by Messrs. Black to the previous fourteen, and other alterations have been made by them, justifying the exchange of the title *Selections Grave and Gay*, &c., for the more comprehensive title *De Quincey's Works*.

The new labour of bringing out the Collected Works occasioned a change in De Quincey's domiciliary arrangements. It may be remembered that from 1838 to 1840, or just after his wife's death and before the happy notion of the cottage at Lasswade, his Edinburgh lodging or working headquarters had been at No. 42 Lothian Street. There seems reason for believing that, though he had been in a variety of lodging-places in the interval, he had always preferred this. At all events, in 1852, when he was in the throes of the first volume of the Collected Works, there was a return to No. 42 Lothian Street, and this time, as it turned out, for so permanent a tenancy that no house in Edinburgh now can compete with that in the interest of its associations with De Quincey.

Lothian Street, the stranger to Edinburgh may be informed, is a dense street of shops and rather dingy houses, in the Old Town, close to the University; and No. 42, like most of the other houses, is what is called in Edinburgh "a common stair." In other words, it is a tenement entered from the street by an arched passage, from which a stone staircase ascends to the several half-flats into which the whole is divided, each with its independent door and door-bell. There are six such half-flats above the ground-floor; and that in which De Quincey had his rooms was the left half-flat on the second floor. The half-flat was then, as it had been at the time of De Quincey's first familiarity with it, in the occupation of a widowed Mrs. Wilson and her sister Miss Stark. They were two most worthy persons, who had come to have some appreciation of the extraordinary character of their lodger; and they were from this time forward to take the most exemplary charge of him. It is an additional satisfaction to know that, soon after they had taken charge of him, and chiefly by Mr. Hogg's friendly exertions, he was disentangled from all his supposed perplexities with other landladies and lodging-house keepers. Mr. Hogg's statements on this point, a vital one in De Quincey's biography, are worth remembering.—Having, with some difficulty, obtained the necessary information from him, and permission to act in his name, Mr. Hogg did find that deposits of papers had been left by him in various places. In the main, however, he found that De Quincey's dread that he could be pursued on account of claims so arising was a mere hallucination. Two former landladies came of their own accord, and with perfect good nature, to deliver up to Mr. Hogg, without any claim whatever, papers of the strange little gentleman

who had lodged with them; in a third case, where a claim for house-room was presented, which troubled De Quincey for some time, it was so clearly exorbitant that it might have been quashed at once but for De Quincey's anxiety about the safety of his papers; and the most flagrant case of all was one in which a whole family trafficked on their possession of papers of De Quincey's as a means of extorting money from him, though not professing that he owed them a farthing. They played on his fears for his papers, doling them out in parcels, and sometimes sending him "bogus-packets," made up of anything; they pleaded abject poverty, and appealed to his pity; and at least once they got up a death in the family, that he might have the pleasure of contributing to the funeral expenses. The note sent to De Quincey on this occasion, and forwarded by him to Mr. Hogg, is a curiosity. "Mr. De Quincey, sir," it begins, "in accord-"ance with your request, I have made out the enclosed "items, money for which I would want for my mother's "funeral. She is to be buried to-morrow, and would like "things settled as early as possible to-day." Mr. Hogg having taken the wretches in hand, they were brought under some sort of control; but there is a trace of trouble from them to as late as 1855.—Two more of Mr. Hogg's stories about De Quincey relate to the same matter of his ubiquitously-scattered papers. Once, in a hotel in the High Street, into which he had taken De Quincey for refuge and a basin of soup during a thunder-shower, the waiter, after looking at De Quincey, said "I think, sir, I have a bundle of papers which you left here some time ago"; and, sure enough, a bundle was produced, which De Quincey had left there about a year before. Another time, having gone to Glasgow once more on a visit to

Professor Lushington, and having taken two tea-chests of papers with him, he had been obliged, by some refractoriness on the part of the porter, to leave them at a bookseller's shop on their way to the Professor's house. This he remembered perfectly; but, as he had taken no note of the name of the bookseller, or the number of the shop, or even of the name of the street, Mr. Hogg found him quite rueful on the subject after his return to Edinburgh. A letter to a friend and a round of inquiries among the Glasgow booksellers made all right; and Mr. Hogg had the pleasure of pointing out to him the two recovered boxes as they lay in his office, and asking what was to be done with them. "Send them to Lothian Street," was the answer; and thither they were accordingly sent, an addition to the vast aggregate of books, periodicals, and newspapers, in mounds on the floor and in tiers along the walls, already crammed into his rooms, and vexing the orderly souls of Mrs. Wilson and Miss Stark.

A worrying, and yet most amusing, business it was for Mr. Hogg to keep De Quincey, in those rooms, or in his occasional adjournments to Lasswade, to his great task of bringing out, with due punctuality, the successive volumes of his Collected Works. It was one long struggle between De Quincey and the printing-press. A message-boy, named Roderick, was kept always ready at the one end, to be shot to Lothian Street or Lasswade for copy when the supply failed; at the other end was De Quincey himself, groaning and working. His preserved notes to Mr. Hogg, excusing his failures and delays, are pathetically characteristic. "My non-performances after circumstantial notice have "been so many," he says in one, "that I can hardly hope "for any credit when I tell you that on Monday I shall "be in Lothian Street with the MS. all ready for the

"press." The excuse on this occasion was his "nervous sufferings"; but another time it is trouble about some unpaid taxes, and consequent "agitation at the prospect of utter ruin past all repair." Again, it is uncertainty whether certain papers are already in the printer's hands or are still in his own possession, with a desire to be sure on the point, so as to be saved, if possible, "a process of stooping" in search of them, from which he could "hardly recover for a fortnight." Once it is owing to "lumbago"; once to his having fallen asleep inopportunely; another time to partial delirium from "want of sleep and opium combined"; another time, to distraction from "having been up and writing all night," with the addition "I have just set fire to my hair." Once the delay is due to "a process of whitewashing or otherwise cleaning ceilings, &c.," which has been going on in the house, and to the unfortunate fact that most of the papers needed at the moment "had been placed within a set of drawers against which is now reared the whitewasher's scaffolding"; and several times it is owing to consideration for Miss Stark, who is not in the best of health, and has too much to do. Miss Stark, in fact, had become indispensable to him, not only buying for him all the articles he wanted, articles of apparel included, but also receiving and returning messages for him, and sorting and numbering his slips of copy, and so minutely cognisant of his daily dealings and difficulties with the press that she began to fancy she was herself a kind of literary lady.[1] It is curious to observe, amid all

[1] Miss Stark is still alive, and in the same No. 42 Lothian Street; and I have had the pleasure of seeing her, and hearing her talk of De Quincey, in the very rooms which he occupied. She remembers that he usually wrote on papers which he held in his left hand, near his eyes, and not at a table, and also that he had

this confusion, the indefatigable and painstaking laboriousness of the little workman, his fastidious care for accuracy, and his delicate regard for the feelings and interests of other people. His notes of excuse are themselves models of superfluous precision; and his instructions to the compositors for corrections of the press and for the proper reading of his manuscript are elaborately over-cautious. He is unhappy sometimes at the thought that the compositors, whose time is their fortune, may be standing idle through his fault; and once he is miserable till he has explained to Mr. Hogg by two letters in succession that the boy Roderick is not to blame for a certain misunderstanding, but had delivered his message with Spartan strictness. Nor, in the long-run, as Mr. Hogg vouches, did De Quincey fail in any essential of his undertaking. In the accounts between them he was equally scrupulous, and indeed morbidly afraid of any benefit to himself by a casual error. It was not long before Mr. Hogg found that a cheque made him uneasy, and that he would always rather have a little cash on account. From another source we learn that he did not like the greasy Scotch one-pound notes, but preferred the medallions of her Majesty's head in gold, silver, or copper.

While No. 42 Lothian Street was De Quincey's established abode and workshop from 1852 onwards, it was at Lasswade, as before, that he was mainly or solely to be seen by visitors. The domestic economy there, however, did not remain unchanged. In 1853 there was the first break in the household by the marriage of his eldest

a peculiar way of notching each slip of manuscript when he had done with it. He had a secret meaning in the practice, which he promised to tell her; but he never did. She does not remember that he went out much at nights, or indeed during the day, except for transit to Lasswade.

daughter, Margaret, to Mr. Robert Craig, the son of a highly-respected neighbour, and the removal of the married pair to Ireland. In 1854 the two younger daughters were away from Lasswade for some time, on a visit to their married sister in her new home; and in 1855 the elder of these, Florence, went out to India, to become the wife of Colonel Baird Smith, an engineer officer of high distinction, whose name and services are still brilliant in our Indian annals. As by that time the medical son Francis had become a duly-qualified physician and gone out to Brazil, De Quincey seems to have felt some compunction afterwards in leaving his single remaining daughter, Emily, so much alone at Lasswade. There were pathetic signs of this, Mrs. Baird Smith informs us, in the increased frequency thenceforward of his affectionate notes and letters from Lothian Street to Lasswade when he could not come himself; and her explanation of the whole matter is:—"He really could not manage his work farther "from the press, and nothing which would have been "natural in other cases, such as my sister's removing into "Edinburgh, would have answered with him." Indeed, though Miss De Quincey's most natural home was still the pretty place on the Esk to which she had been accustomed from her childhood, and where, rather than in Edinburgh, she had pleasant neighbourly ties, she was inevitably absent from it a good deal, after 1855, on visits elsewhere, more especially to her sister, Mrs. Craig, in Ireland. In one such visit, in the autumn of 1857, De Quincey himself actually accompanied her,—the arrival just then of his youngest son, Paul Frederick, on furlough from his regiment in India, having suggested the journey and made the travelling arrangements easier. Even with such an escort, it was something of an adventure for De Quincey

in his seventy-third year; but all was managed to his mind; and there was a new fund of delight for him through the rest of his life in the fact that he had made out this visit to his eldest daughter in her Irish home, and had *seen* the two little ones that were to remember him as their grandfather. From that date there was to be no similar interruption of his usual habits, but only, whenever his youngest daughter was at Lasswade, the customary alternation between the familiar cottage there and his own crib in Lothian Street. Even after he had passed his seventieth year he retained so much of his pedestrian vigour that the distance of seven miles between the two places was nothing to him if he were in the humour, and younger men were surprised at the ease with which he preceded them up one of the braes of the Esk. Latterly, however, there was an increasing feebleness, bringing his rambles more and more within bounds, and sometimes confining him to his Lothian Street rooms for weeks together. A tendency to somnambulism, which showed itself now and then, was a new cause of trepidation on his account to Mrs. Wilson and Miss Stark, already sufficiently in dread of nightly accident to him and his papers from his extreme shortsightedness and perpetual contact with fire and lighted candles. On the other hand, one is glad to find, he was in his latter years comparatively free from the pains and miseries of his constitutional malady. The testimony to this fact is concurrent from several quarters; and the medical hypothesis now is that the "lesion of the stomach" which had been the prime cause of his sufferings, and the explanation of his abnormal consumption of opium, had somehow begun to heal itself, by a kind of natural induration, as old age came on.

The De Quincey of the ten years from 1849 to 1859,

the De Quincey whose voluminous Collected Works were appearing simultaneously in a British edition and an American edition, was naturally an object of even keener social curiosity than the De Quincey of earlier and less rounded-off celebrity. He was thought of as a surviving chief of a former generation, whom one must make haste to see, if he were ever to be seen at all. For the Edinburgh people generally, however, to see De Quincey was no more easy matter now than it had been before. His elusiveness of all ordinary social gatherings had increased rather than diminished; and from that network of great dinner-parties and great evening assemblies which brings all Edinburgh together, over and over again, every season from November to May, he was still allowed to escape by a unanimous vote in favour of his intractable singularity. So long as Wilson lived, it was never the fault of that heartiest and most hospitable of men if he lost sight of De Quincey for any considerable while, or were not applied to first for any act of friendship, or of guardianship in a difficulty, that De Quincey might need. But Wilson died in April, 1854, at the age of sixty-nine, leaving his weaker-bodied friend, then of the same age, to live on for nearly six years more of lingering Edinburgh independence. Among friends of De Quincey's who saw most of him in his later years, before Wilson's death or after, were Mr. Robert Chambers, Mr. Hill Burton, Mr. Alexander Russel of the *Scotsman*, and Mr. J. R. Findlay. Those were still the days too of the pleasant little supper-parties of Mrs. Crowe in Darnaway Street, remembered yet by some, and certainly by the present writer, as among the most excellent and best-managed things of the kind ever known in Edinburgh or elsewhere. By the kindly tact of the hostess, one was always sure to meet at her table, in the

easiest and friendliest fashion, from half-a-dozen to ten or twelve of the men and women best worth knowing, on literary or other grounds, among the residents in Edinburgh or the last week's arrivals. As I write, there rise up in my memory the genial old Sir William Allan and his niece, Mr. and Mrs. George Combe (the latter a daughter of Mrs. Siddons, and with a flash of her mother's dramatic power in her at unexpected moments), the good Robert Chambers, Dr. Samuel Brown, David Scott, Miss Rigby, Mrs. Stirling of Hill Street, the American Miss Cushman, the Italian Ruffini, and the Greek Mousabines. That is a mixed recollection from 1846 ; and it must have been considerably after that date, as I calculate, but while some of those named may have been still among the *contubernales*, that De Quincey was first drawn into the friendly circle. The following anecdote of one of his appearances there is, therefore, only at secondhand :—To suit some of the gentlemen, there had been produced on this occasion, by special grace of the English hostess, materials for the savage Scottish observance called whisky-toddy. In those days the orthodox instrument for mixing the ingredients in the tumbler and conveying them thence to the glass was a "toddy-ladle," generally of silver, but preferably of wood. Mrs. Crowe having apologized for the absence of those articles and the substitution of mere tea-spoons, De Quincey's politeness was moved to hyperbole. "O, don't mention it, Mrs. Crowe," he said; "don't mention it; for, if there is one thing in this world that I abominate more than any other, it is those execrable toddy-ladles." There must be De Quinceyana a thousand times better than this from some of the little *noctes* in Darnaway Street and elsewhere from 1849 onwards, if one could get at them. But almost all De Quincey's

fellow-guests at such little gatherings are gone, as well as himself.

Any rare appearances, such as have been noted, of De Quincey at the table of an Edinburgh friend between 1849 and 1859 connect themselves, of course, with the Edinburgh focus of his little ellipse,—i.e. with Lothian Street. The more formal calls of visitors from a distance, British or American, were still almost invariably at Lasswade, and naturally became fewer and fewer after the marriages of two of his daughters and the absences of the third made his own occasions for being there less frequent. Miss Martineau visited him in 1852, while all his daughters were still with him. She went away charmed by the exceptionally sweet audibility of his voice as it reached her through her ear-trumpet, and she lived to write a posthumous estimate of him, which might have been written more worthily. Mr. Fields, his American publisher, visited him about the same time, and could not afterwards say enough of his gentleness and courtesy of manner and the delights of his conversation. Another American, who visited him in 1854, transmits an anecdote which is worth more than general eulogium. The talk at the table had begun to veer round somehow to the subject of Scotland and the Scotch, when De Quincey, as if waking from a reverie, observed to the visitors that, as the servant who waited was a Scotch girl, he would be particularly obliged if they would reserve anything severe they had to say about the Scottish religion for moments when she should be out of the room. By far the best account, however, of a visit to De Quincey at Lasswade in his later years is one by the Rev. Francis Jacox. The visit, which was in July 1852, extended over some days, and included walks with De Quincey, as well as conver-

sations with him in the cottage. Impressed, as everybody was, with De Quincey's wonderful courtesy, the "sensitive considerateness" of his style of address to all about him, Mr. Jacox was particularly struck by the absence in him of that habit of monologue which is the usual fault of men celebrated for conversational power. He was as willing to listen as to talk. Naturally, however, most of the talk was left to *him*. There were times of torpor or dreaminess when he seemed incapable of anything; but a cup of coffee, or some less visible stimulus, would rouse him like magic. Then his talk would range over all possible topics, from the gayest and lightest to the highest. Mr. Jacox took note of some of his judgments in literary matters. He talked most affectionately of Wilson, who was then broken down in health. In speaking of Sir William Hamilton and his metaphysics his strain rose to nearly its highest mood, but with a reserve on behalf of the later thinker Ferrier, as perhaps the subtler, if not so learned and comprehensive. He had read Isaac Taylor's works, but did not care much about them. With Miss Edgeworth's novels he had much fault to find; Dickens he praised only *cum grano*, but preferred unhesitatingly to Thackeray, on account of his more genial humanity; and against Thackeray's merits, Mr. Jacox thought, he was mulishly obdurate. He would not admire Emerson and Hawthorne to the proper pitch, but had not then read the best of Hawthorne. He showed very considerable curiosity about Maurice and Kingsley, and Christian Socialism, and inquired very particularly about Mr. G. H. Lewes and his London doings and employments. He said that music was a necessity of his daily life, and that, if he ever visited London again, the opera would be his principal attraction. For the theatres in general he had little good

to say, and declared that he could hardly conceive of a performance of a Shakespearian tragedy that should be other than a profanation in his eyes; but he spoke with cordial admiration of Miss Helen Faucit as he had seen her recently in Edinburgh in the part of Antigone. When such conversations with De Quincey were out-of-doors, in the country-roads about Lasswade, Mr. Jacox observed that they were always beset or followed by beggars, and that De Quincey gave something at once to every applicant, and always deferentially and with apology. The last walk Mr. Jacox had with him was in seeing him so far on his way back, on an evening, from Edinburgh to Lasswade. While they were in Princes Street, De Quincey showed a nervous anxiety lest any gesture of himself or his companion should be construed by a cabman as an offer of a fare, and so bring him off the rank. Some horrible experience seemed to be in his mind, and he expressed his dread of "the overbearing brutality of those men." The walk, so far as it was a joint concern, ended at a point in the Meadows, where De Quincey insisted that Mr. Jacox should turn back. Mr. Jacox then bade him farewell, but watched his receding figure as it disappeared up the lane, called Lovers' Loan, leading from the Meadows to the rest of his long route over height and hollow to Lasswade. He had opened a book of Hawthorne's, which Mr. Jacox had given him, and was reading it.

What more is to be known about De Quincey in his last years is to be derived chiefly from those letters to his daughters which, as has been mentioned, became touchingly frequent after the family had been dispersed. Mr. Page has been able to publish a number of specimens, and they have a very lively interest. It cannot be said,

indeed, that they admit us much to that "inner heart" of De Quincey the real nature of which so puzzled those who knew him best. With all his startling outside eccentricities, and even the glaring candours of his opium confessions, he remained an impenetrable being. Wilson himself could never explain him. What dark little core of a soul did his eccentricities conceal; or was there no real core of moral personality at all, but only a strange bunch or conformation of sensitive and intellectual nerves, over which the phenomena of the world could creep with the certainty of a keen response, and that could secrete thoughts and phantasies? The second supposition is irreconcilable with known facts. We have had signs already, and the writings furnish more in abundance, that the gentle, timid, shrinking, abnormally sensitive and polite little man was no more without his hard little bit of central self than other people, and that this might be found out on occasion. He had a very considerable fund of prejudice, temper, opinionativeness, animosity, pugnacity, on which he could draw when he liked; and sharp enough claws could be put forth from underneath the velvet. He had also, we need not doubt, his deeper hours and reveries of self-communing when De Quincey was alone with De Quincey, and more came out and was discoursed between them than friend or enemy could ever know. This mystery of the real De Quincey, however, has to be prosecuted through the whole biography and by means of the sum-total of the materials, and receives little elucidation from the private letters.

But, though these letters tell us little about De Quincey intrinsically that we should not have known otherwise, they let us see some traits of his character in the light of a peculiarly pleasant familiarity. Their fatherly and

grandfatherly fondness is really beautiful. We see the old man, late at night, in Lothian Street, amid his books and papers, stopping his work and pushing it aside, that he may shut his eyes and think for a while of his three girls, and of the little Eva and Johnny in the Irish home of one of them. The arrival of the post with letters from his daughters is the event of the twenty-four hours within which it occurs, and he likes nothing better than to prattle back to them by the next post. Here, however, his difficulties, excuses, and explanations, are often comically absurd. Now he fears he has mislaid the letters just received; now he has but a single sheet of note-paper left, or has to write on a sheet of wretchedly coarse note-paper from a packet he had fortunately bought at the last shop he could find open on a Saturday night; now,—let his daughters exult with him!—he has "sprung a mine of envelopes" underneath the litter on his table, and will be at ease on that score for some time. Worst of all, it is quite uncertain whether the letter he is writing will ever be despatched; for he knows he has written one already, which he cannot now find, and this one may disappear in like fashion, unless fate is propitious. When a letter did emerge from such throttling chances in its origin, it was pretty sure to be worth receiving. With affectionate messages to the recipient and those about her, there might be chat about the progress of the Collected Edition of the Works, or about some incident in De Quincey's last walk or in the Lothian Street *ménage;* but in most cases the letter turned itself into a playful little dissertation, *à la De Quincey*, on some point of etymology or literature casually suggested. Once there was a minute account of a dream in which himself and two of his daughters were the figures, with an illustrative

diagram to assist them in conceiving it exactly. That De Quincey took no ordinary interest in the current public news of the day we know independently; but the letters furnish additional proofs. We hear in them of second editions of the newspapers sent out for when anything of special moment was going on; and the amount of attention to the trial of Palmer in 1856 and to another famous case in 1857 answers to what we should expect from the author of the essay on "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts." Nothing, however, seems to have interested De Quincey so much, or roused him so nearly to a paroxysm of personal excitement, as the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. The fact that his daughter, Mrs. Baird Smith, and his son Paul Frederick, were then in India, and subsequently his pride in the share which fell to his son-in-law, Colonel Baird Smith, in the exertions for the suppression of the Mutiny, brought the tremendous story home to him, and made the impression of it the last great experience of his life.

Through the years of labour over the edition of the Collected Works De Quincey had been amusing himself with fresh literary projects. Mr. Hogg, after noting it as one of the peculiarities of his conversation that sometimes he would propound the most absurd things, and maintain them so gravely that it was impossible to say whether he was merely quizzing you and himself or might not be really in earnest, applies the remark especially to his persistence in bringing forward certain schemes of publishing adventure. While some of these alarmed Mr. Hogg by threatening interruption to the main labour, there was one which would not have been so chimerical in itself had time been left for it. This was a project of a new History of England in twelve volumes. After he was

seventy he still harped on the project to Mr. Hogg, and longed for the conclusion of the Collective Edition, that he might begin the new work. He could finish it, he thought, in four years.

The autumn of 1859 had come, and the thirteenth volume of the Collected Works had been issued, and the fourteenth and last volume was all but ready for the press, when it became evident that De Quincey's work in the world was over. His life had gone to the extreme extent for which it had been wound up, and it was no definite malady, but the mere weakness of old age, that made him take to his bed. His youngest daughter, summoned from Ireland, where she had been on a visit to her sister, found him too feeble to bear removal to Lasswade, and remained with him in Lothian Street. Dr. Warburton Begbie, an Edinburgh physician of the highest celebrity at that day, was called in on the 22nd of October. He visited his patient latterly twice-a-day, finding him sometimes rallying so much as to be able to sit up or recline on a sofa, eager about what was in the day's newspapers, and trying to read them himself, or turning over the leaves of a new book. The perfect tranquillity of the patient, his anxiety not to give trouble, and the clearness with which he discussed the medical treatment of his case and the action of the remedies employed, especially with reference to the effects that might have been left on his constitution by opium, impressed Dr. Begbie greatly. There were, however, times of swooning and sleepy delirium, from which he seemed to awake with surprise. On such occasions his dreams seemed always to be of children. On Sunday the 4th of December the approach of death was so manifest that it was thought right to telegraph for Mrs. Craig, the only

other of his children then within reach. She arrived in time to be recognised and welcomed; and on the morning of Thursday, the 8th of December, the two daughters standing by the bedside, and the physician with them, De Quincey passed away. He had been in a doze for some hours; and, as it had been observed that in his waking hours since the beginning of his illness he had reverted much to the incidents of his childhood and talked especially of his father, regretting that he had known so little of him, so in this final doze his mind seemed to be wandering among the same old memories. "My dear, dear mother: then I was greatly mistaken," he was heard to murmur; and his very last act was to throw up his arms and utter, as if with a cry of surprised recognition, "Sister! Sister! Sister!" The vision seemed to be that of his sister Elizabeth, dead near Manchester seventy years before, and now waiting for him on the banks of the river.

De Quincey, at the time of his death, was seventy-four years and four months old. There were obituary notices in the newspapers, but not nearly so numerous or loud and elaborate as those which came out on the death of Macaulay, at the age of fifty-nine, twenty days later in the same month. Nor can I find that there was any great attendance at De Quincey's funeral. He was buried in the West Churchyard of Edinburgh, beside his wife and two of their children; and on a tablet on a rather ruinous part of one of the walls of that churchyard, at the end of the bustling Princes Street and close under the Castle Rock, one may read now this epitaph:—*Sacred to the Memory of Thomas De Quincey, who was born at Greenhay, near Manchester, August 15th,* 1785, *and died in Edinburgh, December 8th,* 1859, *and of Margaret, his wife,*

who died August 7th, 1837. The epitaph, it will be observed, preserves the blunder of most of the biographers as to the place of De Quincey's birth. What does it matter, or the poorness altogether of the monument? Scott, whose monument is the central object of the city, and the finest ever reared anywhere in the world to a man of letters, was a native of Edinburgh; Wilson, the noble bronze statue of whom attracts the eye in Princes Street, a little to the west of the Scott monument, was an Edinburgh citizen by adoption; De Quincey, through three-fourths of his literary life belonging by accident to Edinburgh, was in no sense an Edinburgh man, and could expect no corresponding posthumous honours. Not one in two thousand of the inhabitants of Edinburgh at this moment knows where he is buried, or that he is buried in Edinburgh at all; and not once in a year does any one of the select hundred who may be aware of the fact and the place think of visiting the humble grave. Again what does it matter? De Quincey's real constituency consists of all those, anywhere over the English-speaking world, who care for De Quincey's writings.

CHAPTER XI.

DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

One obvious distinction of De Quincey from most of the other chiefs of English Literature is that the writings by which he holds his high rank consist almost entirely of papers contributed to periodicals. Various books which he projected remained projects only; and, with the exception of his *Logic of Political Economy*, now included among his collected works, and his novel called *Klosterheim*, of which there has been no English reprint, all the products of his pen during the forty years of his literary life appeared originally in the pages of magazines or other serials. Just as Shakespeare may be described, in an off-hand manner, as the author of about thirty-seven plays, so may De Quincey be said to have taken his place in our Literature as the author of about 150 magazine articles.

Another obvious characteristic of De Quincey's writings is their extreme multifariousness. They range over an extraordinary extent of ground, the subjects of which they principally treat being themselves of the most diverse kinds, while their illustrative references and allusions shoot through a perfect wilderness of miscellaneous scholarship. This multifariousness of his matter is, in fact, but a manifestation of that peculiar personal character which chanced in his case to be brought into the business of literature. "For my own part, with-

"out breach of truth or modesty," he says in one place, "I may affirm that my life has been, on the whole, the "life of a philosopher: from my birth, I was made an "intellectual creature; and intellectual in the highest "sense my pursuits and pleasures have been, even from my "schoolboy days." Again, in another place, he says:—"I "have passed more of my life in absolute and unmitigated "solitude, voluntarily, and for intellectual purposes, than "any person of my age whom I have ever either met with, "heard of, or read of." A stress, not intended by De Quincey himself, may be laid on the word *intellectual* in these passages. To hardly any one so little as to him could there have been applied in his youth that observation which Goethe applied with such remarkable prescience to Carlyle in the year 1827, when he defined him as "a *moral* force of great importance," and added that, precisely on account of this depth of the *moral* in his constitution, it was impossible to foresee all that he would produce and effect. No one could have said of De Quincey, at any time of his life, that his strength lay in any predominance of the moral element in his nature. On the contrary, though severe enough in some of his criticisms on conduct, and owning a distinct æsthetic preference for whatever is lovely and of good report, he was defective in original moral impetus or vehemence to a degree beyond the average. It is no mere figure from grammar to say that few men have come into the world, or have gone through it, with a more meagre outfit of the imperative mood. It was because he was so weak in this mood that we may call him so specifically, in his own language, "an *intellectual* creature." His main interest in life was that of universal curiosity, sheer inquisitiveness and meditativeness about all things whatsoever. Hence his early passion for the acquisition

of book-knowledge, and the fact that before his twenty-fifth year he had read so much and so variously as to be even then more entitled to the name of *polyhistor* than almost any of his English contemporaries. Add that other store of knowledge which he had acquired by the exercise of a most subtle and insinuating faculty of observation upon human life and character around him, the "*quicquid agunt homines*" in all its varieties of "*votum, timor, ira, voluptas, gaudia, discursus*"; and add moreover a preternaturally tenacious memory; and it will be seen with what an unusual stock of materials De Quincey came to the craft of magazine authorship. When he did so in his thirty-fifth year, it was under the compulsion of circumstances. He would rather not have adopted the craft; he would rather have gone on still as a private student and observer, with the chance of some outcome in laboured book-form at his own leisure; but, once harnessed to the periodical printing-press, he was at no loss for matter. His command of German greatly increased in those days his range into the unhackneyed and uncommon; but, without that help, his extensive readings in the classics, in mediæval Latin, and in our earlier and less-known English authors, would have sufficed, in the grasp of a memory so retentive as his, to impart to his writings much of that polyhistoric character, that multifariousness of out-of-the-way learning, which we discern in them.

It is an important advance to be able to add that De Quincey's writings, so miscellaneous in their collective range, are all, or almost all, of high quality. There are differences among them in this respect; but there is hardly one that does not, in the stereotyped phrase of reviewers, "well repay perusal." Remembering this high general level of goodness through such a numerous series of articles,

and remembering the super-excellent goodness of not a few, admirers of De Quincey are in the habit of saying among themselves plaintively "Ah! there is no such writing nowadays!" and have actually put the exclamation into print. This is, in part, only the natural exaggeration of loyalty to an old favourite; and it forgets, in the first place, what a quantity of very bad magazine-writing there was in the days when De Quincey was at his most brilliant in that business, and also what a quantity of excellent writing there is in our magazines and reviews at present. But, in a rough way, the complaint seems to hit a truth. With some exceptions, there does seem to be less of real mental exertion, less of notion that real mental exertion is called for, in the magazine-writing and review-writing of the present time than there was in the palmy old days when De Quincey, Carlyle, Macaulay, and some others, were doing their best in our monthlies and quarterlies, and making their living by that species of labour. Anything does,—any kind of useful, or, as they are beginning to call it, "informatory," printed matter, or any compost of rough proximate ideas on a subject, or any string of platitudes, repeating what nobody ever did not know, if tinselled sufficiently into pretty sentences. Not unfrequently, when you have read the article of greatest celebrity in the current number of a periodical, you find that there has been no other motive to it than a theftuous hope to amuse an hour for you after dinner by serving up to you again the plums from some book which you and every one else have read three weeks or a month before, the entire drift of the article otherwise, and the whole substance of its connecting paragraphs, not betraying the possession, or at least the expenditure, of one quarter of an ounce of real or original brain. It is experience such as this that

makes one, so hastily, a *laudator temporis acti* in periodical literature as in other matters, and drives one back to De Quincey's sixteen volumes or to any similar collection, with such angry forgetfulness of the fact that these collections themselves are but the solid monuments remaining from amid acres of vanished rubbish. The forgetfulness is wrong, but the result for readers may happen to be beneficial. De Quincey's sixteen volumes of magazine articles are full of brain from beginning to end. At the rate of about half a volume a day, they would serve for a month's reading, and a month continuously might be worse expended. There are few courses of reading from which a young man of good natural intelligence would come away more instructed, charmed, and stimulated, or, to express the matter as definitely as possible, with his mind more *stretched*. Good natural intelligence, a certain fineness of fibre, and some amount of scholarly education, have to be presupposed, indeed, in all readers of De Quincey. But, even for the fittest readers, a month's complete and continuous course of De Quincey would be too much. Better have him on the shelf, and take down a volume at intervals for one or two of the articles to which there may be an immediate attraction. An evening with De Quincey in this manner will always be profitable.

Not only was it De Quincey's laudable habit to put brain into all his articles, but it so chanced that the brain he had at his disposal was a brain of no common order. Let us get rid, however, of the disagreeable word *brain*, and ask, in more manly and less physiological fashion, what were the chief characteristics of De Quincey's peculiar mind and genius. At the basis of all, as we have seen, was his learning, his wealth of miscellaneous and accurate knowledge. On that topic enough has been said; and we advert

to it again only because it is well to remember that, whatever else De Quincey was, he was at all events a scholar and polyhistor.

But what was he besides? He was distinguished from most modern specimens of the genus *polyhistor* by the possession, in the first place, of a singularly independent, clear, subtle, exact, and penetrating intellect. The independence of his intellect is in itself remarkable. No one was less disposed to take common opinions on trust, no one more keenly sceptical in his general judgments, no one more ready to challenge a popular or even a scholastic tradition on any subject, reinvestigate the evidence, and persist in getting at the root of the matter for himself. His strength in this quality has been called love of paradox, and sometimes it does go to that length. As he himself explained, however, a paradox is properly not something incredible, but only something beyond the bounds of present belief; and it is remarkable how often, when he is followed in one of his so-called paradoxes, he turns out to be right. Sometimes, when this happens, one finds that it was the mere exercise of shrewd common sense, a rapid deductive perception from the first of what *must* be the case in the circumstances, that enabled him to challenge the common opinion; but more frequently it is his historical knowledge that serves him, his power of marshalling facts inductively and interpreting their relations. But, even when he fails to convince, he always instructs, always suggests something that remains in the mind and goes on working, never leaves a question exactly as it was. One is reminded in reading him of Goldsmith's saying about Burke's conversation in contrast with Johnson's. Admiring Johnson's extraordinary powers in that way as much as any man, but irritated by Boswell's perpetual harping on the theme,

"Is he like Burke, sir, who winds into a subject like a serpent?" Goldsmith was once moved to ask. Now, this serpentine insinuation of himself into the heart of a subject, rather than Johnson's direct and broadside style of attack upon a subject externally, was De Quincey's usual method. He generally knows his conclusion from the first, and sometimes announces it dogmatically at the outset; but, whether for inquiry towards his conclusion or for proof of it after it has been announced, his habit is to choose a point of entry, and thence, by subtle and intricate windings, to reach the centre, where the concurrent trains will meet, and all will become clear. His windings have often the appearance of wilful digressions, and digressiveness is the fault with which he is most commonly charged. It was perhaps the same labyrinthine habit, or at all events the tendency to long-spun threads of reasoning, that Carlyle had in view when he applied the epithet "wire-drawn" to some of De Quincey's mental products. His digressions, however, to use his own phrase, have a wonderful knack of *revolving* to the point whence they set out, and generally with a fresh freight of meaning to be incorporated at that point; and, so far as one might acquiesce in the description of some of De Quincey's mental products as "wire-drawn," it is in cases where one might agree with Carlyle that the kind of matter dealt with was not worth so much manipulation, and that simple assumption or asseveration, or decision by a toss-up, would have saved time and answered all practical purposes. Very rarely, however, will one of De Quincey's subtlest ingenuities be voted useless by any reader who does come qualified with the due amount of preliminary interest in the kind of matter discussed,—so much pleasure is there in observing the ingenuity itself, and so certain is it, as has been

already said, that some germ of future thought will be left if the immediate result has been disappointing. Then with what a passion for scientific exactness does De Quincey treat everything, and in what a state of finished clearness at the end he leaves every speculation of his, so far as it may have been carried! His numerical divisions and subdivisions, so unusual in literary papers, are themselves signs of the practised thinker, refusing to part with any of the habits or devices of scientific analysis wherever they will help him. In short, very seldom has there been such a combination of the purely logical intellect with so much of scholarly erudition.

De Quincey's intellect, while keenly analytic and exact, was also very rich and inventive. The distinction will be understood by remembering the essays and disquisitions of Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Burke, or Coleridge, in contrast with those of such thinkers as Locke, Bishop Butler, David Hume, James Mill, or Sir William Hamilton. That the distinction does not coincide with that into the two opposed philosophical schools will have appeared from the mixture of names. Neither does it connect itself with any distinction of emotional temperaments among thinkers, as into the cool and the fervid. There may be a fervid thinker whose manner of thinking is of the plain and straightforward sort; and there may be a cool thinker whose manner of thinking, while equally scientific and precise, is at the same time rich and inventive. Nor does Bacon's distinction between *lumen siccum* or dry light, and *lumen humidum*, or light drenched in the affections and customs, correspond exactly with what is meant; nor does the ordinary distinction between the non-poetic and the poetic, though that comes nearer. The distinction is purely one of intellectual manner, and may

be seen where there is identity in the substance of the thought to be expressed. Some writers, knowing what they mean to say beforehand, say it nakedly and rigidly, with nothing additional or subsidiary; others, meaning the same thing, and equally knowing what they mean beforehand, cannot put it forth without putting forth also a good deal more that has been generated in the very act of thinking it out, and that, while organically related to it, may be independently interesting. De Quincey belongs, in the main, to the latter class. As he had a teeming memory, so he had, as he tells us himself, "an electric aptitude for seizing analogies," or, as he again expresses it more fully, "a logical instinct for feeling in a moment the secret analogies or parallelisms that connect things else apparently remote." Hence that quality of his thought which we have called richness or inventiveness. In the act of thinking anything, metonymies, metaphors, anecdotes, illustrations historical or fantastic, start up in his mind, become incorporate with his primary thought, and are, in fact, its language. It will not do to call this, as some have proposed, the literary mode of treating a subject, and to call the bleaker mode the strictly scientific; for the former may be as strictly scientific, as valid and effective logically, as the latter. It would not be difficult, at all events, were a specimen passage of exposition or reasoning produced from a modern English writer of the more arid and rigid order, to produce from De Quincey, if the same topic should be really within his province and he should chance to have treated it, a parallel passage in *his* richer style beating his rigid brother's out of sight for logical precision and clearness, perfection of impression on the pure understanding. Nevertheless, as it is the richer and more inventive style of writing that succeeds best in

producing what, while serving the purposes of philosophical or scientific exposition, will take rank also distinctively as a piece of *literature*, there is no harm in saying that De Quincey's intellect was in the main of the literary order. In most of his papers it is professedly as a man of letters, remembering the aims and objects of literature proper, and seeking to touch the general human heart, that he handles philosophical or other speculative problems. Hence those egotisms, those frequent Montaigne-like confidences between himself and his readers as he proceeds, which, as part of his passion for introducing whatever of general human interest can be made relative to a subject or can brighten and illustrate it, give to his most abstract dissertations such a character of individuality or De Quinceyism. There are cases, his greatest admirers must admit, in which the subsidiary swallows up the primary, and the captain's luggage all but sinks the ship and cargo. For example, it is rather provoking to a short temper, in a paper on Sir William Hamilton and his Philosophy, to find the exordium consisting of a long complaint about the postal difficulties between Lasswade and Edinburgh, and the same subject and others equally irrelevant recurring *ad libitum* throughout, while poor Sir William is kept waiting in a corner and is fetched out of it only at intervals. The only excuse in such cases is that De Quincey seems to have understood it to be bargained between himself and his readers that, whatever title he gave to a paper, he was to be the sole judge of what it should turn out to be, provided the sum-total should be sufficiently amusing. Very rarely, however, is any such excuse needed. While it does seem to have been a canon with De Quincey, in the preparation of his articles, that the sum-total of each should be interesting by some means or other, and while

very often an article is not quite what would have been expected from the title, it is astonishing how habitually, in the hurry of magazine-writing, he contrived to redeem and justify his title, keep his real subject in hand through all seeming involutions and digressions, return with artistic fidelity to the key-note, and leave all at the end, as we have said, in a state of finished clearness.

There was in De Quincey's genius, as all know, a very considerable vein of humour. A sense of fun follows him into his most serious disquisitions, and reveals itself in freaks of playfulness and jets of comic fancy; and once or twice, as in his *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*, he breaks into sheer extravagance or wild and protracted rollick. Even then it cannot be said that his humour is of the largest-hearted kind, so dependent is it on deliberate irony, a Petronian jostling of the ghastly with the familiar, or the express simulation of lunacy. In its display on the smaller scale, as diffused through his writings, it is generally good-natured and kindly. It is not to be denied, however, that there was an ingredient of the mischievous or Mephistophelic in De Quincey's temper, which could show itself occasionally under the guise of his usually gentle humour. He could never have been "a good hater," his equipment of moral energy being too languid for that; but there are parts and passages of his writings that leave the impression of a something which it would be difficult to distinguish from spite and malevolence.

Humour and pathos, we have been told, are twins and inseparable. However that may be, De Quincey's endowment in pathos was certainly not less than his endowment in humour. From his earliest infancy, as we saw, a sense of the manifold miseries of life had been

impressed upon him by his own experience and observation, and had settled in him into a kind of brooding melancholy. Not only such common calamities as bereavement, disease, physical pain, poverty, oppression, misconstruction, contempt, but the rarer and more secret forms of anguish that belong to peculiar temperaments and fatal shocks of circumstance, had been meditated by him, with the diligence of a constitutional bias to that sombre field of study, and with continued aids from his own troubles, till he had become a master in the whole science of sorrow. In particular, that early discovery which had first made the word *Pariah* so significant to him, the discovery of the omnipresence of inherited and unregarded misery, in specks or in masses, on the skirts of smiling society, or actually within its bosom, had accompanied him all his life long, till the word *Pariah* had become, as we noted, one of the most indispensable words in his vocabulary, and the corresponding notion one of his forms of thought. In his personal behaviour, feeble as it was practically, this recollection of the miserable and dismal on all sides of him, this incessant wandering of his thoughts to the slave, the pauper, the lazar, the criminal, the street-outcast, and the maniac, had shown itself in a kind of constant anti-Pharisaism, a constant self-humiliation and pity for the abject. Why should he abhor, why should he condemn, why should he stand aloof, why should he refuse alms, or institute very rigid inquiries before giving: what was he himself that he should be punctilious? This mood, and the theme which occasioned it, he carried into his writings. There too one finds a habitual recollection of the variety and immensity of suffering diffused through life; and there too the inclination of the teaching, in the matter of

the ways and means of dealing with crime and misery, is always towards what is commonly called "the sentimental," but some would call "the Christian." Hence also, in part, the frequent tendency to the lyrical and plaintive in the cast of De Quincey's language.

There was yet a grander source of this tendency to the lyrical in his feeling for the mysterious and sublime. It was a saying of his own that he could not live without mystery. No man that is worth much can. If all humanity could be rolled into one soul, to think and feel as such, then, all those activities and necessities having been abolished which arise from the very fact that it is distributed or disparate, into what mood could it settle and be absorbed but that of wondering speculation into its own origin? On this very account, is not this mood, which may be called the metaphysical mood, the most essentially and specifically *human* of all moods? Most people have no time for it; they have too much to do; but he is hardly a man who does not fall into it sometimes; and it is nursed in some into abnormal intensity by constitutional aptitude and by habits of solitude. De Quincey was one of these. He was wrapt in a general religious wonder; he went through the world, one may say, in a fit of metaphysical musing. But not only was he occupied, as all such minds are, with the great objects of religious contemplation in its most abstract reaches towards the invisible, and with the standing metaphysical problems connected with those objects; his sense of mystery fastened also on all those elementary sublimities in nature or life which, by their pre-eminent power over the human imagination, seem like the chief irruptions of the invisible and supernatural into the sphere of man. The thunder and the lightning, the sun in the heavens,

the nocturnal sky, the quiet vastness of a mountain-range, the roar of the unresting ocean, the carnage of a great battle-field, the stealthy ravage of a pestilence, the tramp of a multitude in insurrection, a Joan of Arc heroic and death-defying before her judges, Cæsar at the Rubicon when the world hung on his decision and there came upon him the phrenzy to cross,—such were the physical grandeurs, and such the facts and moments of historic majesty, with which De Quincey's mind delighted to commune, as if seeing in them the clearest messages from infinitude and the most startling intimations of the intermingling of the demoniacal with the divine. Yet another descent, however, and we find his passion for mystery taking relief even in the wizardly and necromantic. Among the passages of his early reading which had struck him with an effect so extraordinary that he could account for it only by supposing that they had wakened special affinities in his constitution, he mentions particularly the opening scene in *Macbeth*:—

A Desert Place. Thunder and Lightning. Enter three Witches.

First Witch. When shall we three meet again,
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
Second Witch. When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.
Third Witch. That will be ere the set of sun.

It would be difficult for any one not to carry away something of the feeling of this passage, and hundreds of thousands have done so; but what we observe in De Quincey is that he carried away the feeling and retained it in that form of a permanent tenet which it seems to have held in Shakespeare's own creed: viz., in the form of a postulate for the imagination, if not for the reason, of

the interference in human affairs of other and more occult agencies than are dreamt of in the ordinary philosophy. No one, indeed, could be more humorously pungent on all superstitions of the witchcraft order than De Quincey was. He took special pleasure in showing how, by the application of mathematics and physical tests, the most pretentious of those superstitions, such as Astrology, could be blasted into nonsense. But this does not prevent our detecting in him a lurking fondness for some personal variety of the doctrine of a possible interfusion of the non-human or quondam-human with the known life of the present. Perhaps the best name for this variety of the affection for the mysterious in De Quincey's mind is Druidism or the Druidic element. It is a more common element in British genius, and perhaps a more respectable, than is generally supposed. It reveals itself in De Quincey in his fondness for noting dreams, omens, casual symbolisms, marvellous coincidences, anticipations or prophecies of death, and the like, and also in his liking for such subjects of historical investigation as secret societies, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and the Pagan Oracles.

To be noted, finally, in this enumeration of De Quincey's characteristics, is the prominence in his genius of the special faculty of poetic imagination. Though involved partly in what has just been said as to the strength of his feeling for the mysterious and sublime, and also in what was formerly said as to the richness and inventiveness of his manner of thinking on any subject, this remark is really independent. The feeling for the mysterious and sublime is a natural cause of poetic conception, and a habit of poetic conception will contribute, with other things, to richness or literary charm in the treatment of a subject; but the poetic faculty, in its distinct and special

form, is the faculty of continuous constructive dreaming, of "bodying forth the forms of things unknown," of turning meanings and feelings into actual "shapes," i. e. into visual and representative phantasies. In what large measure De Quincey possessed this faculty, and how conscious he was that the specimens of it he had left might be one of his distinctions among English prose-writers, are as generally known as the fact of his opium-eating, and are indeed often connected with that fact in recollections of him.

In an essay on "The Genius of De Quincey" Mr. Shadworth Hodgson, who knew him personally, vouches that no description of him could surpass for exactness that provided beforehand by the poet Thomson in the stanza of his *Castle of Indolence* in which he introduces the bard Philomelus :—

> He came, the bard, a little Druid wight
> Of withered aspect ; but his eye was keen,
> With sweetness mixed. In russet brown bedight,
> As is his sister of the copses green,
> He crept along, unpromising of mien.
> Gross he who judges so ! His soul was fair,
> Bright as the children of yon azure sheen.
> True comeliness, which nothing can impair,
> Dwells in the mind : all else is vanity and glare.

The quotation is a happy one, and entitles Mr. Hodgson to our thanks. By this time, however, we ought to know our little Druid wight somewhat more intimately than by his external appearance. It remains only to say something about his English style.

In no case is there better proof or illustration than in De Quincey's of the important principle of the radical identity of style and thought, the impossibility of separating them in ultimate theory, and the mischief of

the common habit of conceiving otherwise. In writing or speaking, it is not as if you first obtained your thought, and then looked about for a mantle in which to dress it, and might choose the mantle coarse or fine, loose or tight, green or purple. The mantle itself, every fibre of it, is a fabrication of thinkings and feelings, coming into existence by the very action and motion of that main thought or feeling which you call the core or substance, and organically united with it, and partaking of all its qualities. To change your style is to change your mode of thinking; nay, to change the kind of matter that you will allow to come into your mind. All those characteristics of De Quincey's mind that have been enumerated reproduce themselves, therefore, as characteristics of his style, and may be observed and studied afresh under that name. Hence too an excellency in him that ought to be found in every writer who ranges over any considerable variety of subjects,—to wit, a versatility of style, a change in the character of the wording and the syntax, from the simple and plain to the richer and more involved, answering to every change in the matter, mood, or purpose. To write always in an easy conversational style means never to allow anything to come into the mind that could not be generated in the course of easy conversation with a friend or two,—which, as friends now go, would be hard news for philosophy, poetry, and a few other things that are considered not unimportant; to try to write always like Goldsmith or Charles Lamb means to beg to have your mind taken back and remelted into the precise mould of Goldsmith's or Charles Lamb's,—which might be an exchange in your favour, but is impossible; to write always in good old Saxon English and eschew Latin and Greek words means to abstain from traffic with all objects and

notions that have come into the cognisance of the English intellect since the time of King Harold, or else to make yourself a scarecrow and laughing-stock, and forswear some of the noblest glories of your composite nationality, by rigging yourself up in imagined equivalents from the vocabulary of Cedric and Gurth the swineherd. All the same, while there ought to be this expectation of variety in the style of a writer, according to his subject and purpose, it remains true that every writer has, on the whole, a style of his own. He is discernible from others by his style, just as, and just because, he is discernible from others by the total contour of that combination of mental qualities which is called his genius. Like most other traditional and time-honoured distinctions, the distinction between thought and style is practically valuable; it is indeed indispensable in criticism; but the reason is that the study of a writer's style is, in fact, one way, and the most obvious way, of becoming minutely acquainted with his mental resources and processes. Style is mental behaviour from moment to moment; and, if it involves such a thing as a self-imposed rule or rhythm, then that rule or rhythm is itself a function of the mind that imposes it, contents included as well as habits.

The style of De Quincey, as might be expected, is prevailingly intellectual. There is nothing tempestuous in it; we are not hurried along by any excess of rage or other animating passion. Even when his pathos or his feeling of the mysterious and sublime is at its highest, and the strain accordingly becomes most lyrical, we are aware of the presence of a keen intellectual perceptiveness, an artistic self-possession, a power of choosing and reasoning among different means towards a desired effect. It is a beautiful style, uniquely De Quincey's, the characteristic

of which, in its more level and easy specimens, is intellectual nimbleness, a light precision and softness of spring, while in the higher specimens, where the movement becomes more involved and intricately rhythmical, there is still the same sense of a leisurely intellectual instinct, rather than glow and rapture, as regulating the feat. If one could fancy such a thing as a flow of ivy or other foliage, rich, soft, and glancing, but not too dense, advancing quietly over a surface and covering it equably, but with a power of shooting itself rapidly to selected points and pinnacles, *that* might be an image of De Quincey's language overspreading a subject. It moves quietly, enfolding all it meets with easy grace, and leaving a vesture pleasantly soft and fine, rather than gaudily-varied or obtrusive; but it can collect itself into rings of overgrowth, or shoot into devices and festoons. Very often, when the subject is simple, when it is an ordinary piece of description or explanation that is on hand, the phrasing is familiar and colloquial, with short and simple sentences to correspond, though even then with a scholarly tact for neatness and accuracy, a quest of liveliness and elegance, and a wonderful power of alighting on the exact word that is fittest. The tendency of De Quincey, however, as all know, is to subjects of a recondite order, and to the recondite in all subjects; and hence what is usually remembered as De Quincey's style is that style of more stately complexity, with long evolutions and harmonies of sentence, and free resort to all the wealth of the Latin element in our tongue, of which his more elaborate writings are examples. On this subject of the "elaborate" style a quotation from himself, reflecting on the style of Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, may be relevant:—

> Hazlitt was not eloquent, because he was discontinuous. No

man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and (to borrow an impressive word from Coleridge) non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent; the main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution, in the *law* of the succession. The elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now, Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image, which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusions of colour, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone. . . . Hazlitt's thoughts were of the same fractured and discontinuous order as his illustrative images,—seldom or never self-diffusive; and *that* is a sufficient argument that he had never cultivated philosophic thinking. . . . We are bound to acknowledge that Lamb thought otherwise on this point, manifesting what seemed to us an extravagant admiration of Hazlitt, and perhaps even in part for that very glitter which we are denouncing; at least he did so in conversation with ourselves. But, on the other hand, as this conversation travelled a little into the tone of a disputation, and *our* frost on this point might seem to justify some undue fervour by way of balance, it is very possible that Lamb did not speak his absolute and dispassionate judgment. And yet again, if he *did*, may we, with all reverence for Lamb's exquisite genius, have permission to say that his own intellect sinned by this very habit of discontinuity? . . . He himself, we fear, not bribed by indulgent feelings to another, not moved by friendship, but by native tendency, shrank from the continuous, from the sustained, from the elaborate. The elaborate, indeed, without which much truth and beauty must perish in germ, was by name the object of his invectives. The instances are many, in his own beautiful essays, where he literally collapses, literally sinks away from openings suddenly offering themselves to flights of pathos or solemnity in direct prosecution of his own theme. On any such summons, where an ascending impulse

and an untired pinion were required, he *refuses* himself (to use military language) invariably. The least observing reader of *Elia* cannot have failed to notice that his most felicitous passages always accomplish their circuit in a few sentences. The gyration within which his sentiment wheels, no matter of what kind it may be, is always the shortest possible. It does not prolong itself, it does not repeat itself, it does not propagate itself. . . . We ourselves, occupying the very station of polar opposition to that of Lamb, being as morbidly, perhaps, in the one excess as he in the other, naturally detected this omission in Lamb's nature at an early stage of our acquaintance. Not the famed Regulus, with his eyelids torn away, and his uncurtained eyeballs exposed to the noontide glare of a Carthaginian sun, could have shrieked with more anguish of recoil from torture than we from certain sentences and periods in which Lamb perceived no fault at all. *Pomp*, in our apprehension, was an idea of two categories; the *pompous* might be spurious, but it might also be genuine. It is well to love the simple,—*we* love it; nor is there any opposition at all between *that* and the very glory of pomp. But, as we once put the case to Lamb, if, as a musician, as the leader of a mighty orchestra, you had this theme offered to you,—"Belshazzar the king gave a great feast to a thousand of his lords,"—or this, "And on a certain day Marcus Cicero stood up, and in a set speech rendered thanks to Caius Cæsar for Quintus Ligarius pardoned and Marcus Marcellus restored,"—surely no man would deny that in such a case simplicity, though in a passive sense not lawfully absent, must stand aside as totally insufficient for the *positive* part.

A great deal of De Quincey's best and most characteristic writing is in the stately and elaborate style here described, the style of sustained splendour, of prolonged wheeling and soaring, as distinct from the style of crackle and brief glitter, of chirp and short flight. This is precisely on account of the exalted and intricate nature of his meaning and feeling in those cases; and, if some readers there fall off from him or dislike him, it is because they themselves

are deficient in wing and sinew. For those who do adhere to him and follow him in his passages of more involved and sustained eloquence, there are few greater pleasures possible in modern English prose. However magnificent the wording, there is always such an exact fit between it and the amount and shape of the under-fluctuating thought that suspicion of inflation or bombast anywhere never occurs to one. The same presence everywhere of a vigilant intellect appears in the perfect logical articulation of sentence with sentence and of clause with clause; while the taste of the technical artist appears equally in the study of minute optical coherence in the imagery and in the fastidious care for fine sound. In this last quality of style,—to which, in its lowest degree, Bentham gave the name of *pronunciability*, insisting most strenuously on its importance in all writing,—De Quincey is a master. Such was the delicacy of his ear, however, that mere *pronunciability* was not enough for him, and *musical beauty* had to be superadded. Once, writing of Father Newman, and having described him as "originally the ablest son of Puseyism, but now a powerful architect of religious philosophy on his own account," he interrupts himself to explain that he might have ended the sentence more briefly by substituting for the last nine words the single phrase "master-builder," but that his ear could not endure "a sentence ending with two consecutive trochees, and each of those trochees ending with the same syllable *er*." He adds, "Ah reader! I would the gods had made thee rhythmical, that thou mightest comprehend the thousandth part of my labours in the evasion of cacophony." The last phrase, "the evasion of cacophony," is an instance of another of De Quincey's verbal habits in his more elaborate writing,—his deliberate choice now and

then of an unusually learned combination of Latin or Greek or other polysyllabic words. Often, as in the present instance, it is a whim of mere humour or self-irony. Often, however, it is from a desire to be exact to his meaning and to leave that meaning indissolubly associated with the word or phrase that does most closely express it. Occasionally, as when he speaks of "the crepuscular antelucan worship" of the Essenes, or of a sentence as being liable to "a whole nosology of malconformations," or of the importance attached to the mystery of baptism among our forefathers as "shown by the multiplied *ricochets* through which it impressed itself upon their vocabulary," it will depend on the temper and the intellectual alertness of the reader at the moment whether the phrase is accepted or voted needlessly quaint and abstruse; but most of his Latinisms or other neologisms do recommend themselves as at once luminous and tasteful, and it is hardly to them that exception is taken by his most severe critics. They object rather to certain faults to which he is liable in those portions of his writings where he affects the brisk and popular. By a kind of reaction from his other extreme of stateliness, he is then apt to be too familiar and colloquial, and to help himself to slang and kitchen-rhetoric. He will speak of a thing as "smashed,"—which is too violent for the nerves of those who cannot bear to see a thing "smashed," but prefer that it should be "broken in pieces" or "reduced to fragments"; he will interject such an exclamation as "O crimini!",—which is unpardonable in sedate society; he will take the Jewish historian Josephus by the button, address him as "Joe" through a whole article, and give him a black eye into the bargain, —which is positively profane. In most such cases one does not see why De Quincey should not have the same

liberty as Swift or Thackeray; but it must be admitted that sometimes the joke is feeble and the slang unpleasant. In excuse one has to remember that a magazine-writer is often driven to shifts. And, slips of taste in the vocabulary discounted, how many magazine-writers will compete with De Quincey in the accuracy, the disciplined accuracy, of his grammar? His pointing in itself is a testimony to the logical clearness of his intellect; and I have found no single recurring fault of syntax in his style, unless it be in his sanction of a very questionable use of the English participle. "No Christian state could be much in advance of another, *supposing* that Popery opposed no barriers to free communication," is an example of a frequent construction with De Quincey, which I wish he had avoided. As he has not, the benefit of his authority may be claimed for that apparent slovenliness of an unrelated or misrelated participle which, by some fiction of an elliptical case-absolute, or of transmutation of the participial form into a conjunction or adverb, passes as consistent with the free genius of our uninflected language. But it jars on a classic sense of grammar, and is wholly unnecessary.[1]

[1] For a minute and instructive study of the mechanism of De Quincey's style, I may refer to Professor Minto's *Manual of English Prose Literature.*

CHAPTER XII.

DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS: CLASSIFICATION AND REVIEW.

How are De Quincey's writings to be classified? His own classification, propounded in the General Preface to the edition of his Collected Works, was to the effect that they might be distributed roughly into three sorts,—*first*, those papers of fact and reminiscence the object of which was primarily to amuse the reader, though they might reach to a higher interest, e. g. the *Autobiographic Sketches; secondly*, essays proper, or papers addressing themselves purely or primarily to "the understanding as an insulated faculty," e. g. *The Essenes*, *The Cæsars*, and *Cicero*; and, *thirdly*, that "far higher class of compositions" which might be considered as examples of a very rare kind of "impassioned prose," e. g. large portions of *The Confessions of an Opium-Eater* and the supplementary *Suspiria de Profundis*. This classification, though not quite the same as Bacon's division of the "parts of learning" (by which he meant "kinds of literature") into History or the Literature of Memory, Philosophy or the Literature of Reason, and Poetry or the Literature of Imagination, is practically equivalent. Hence, as Bacon's classification is the more scientific and searching, and also the most familiar and popular, we shall be pretty safe in adopting it, and dividing De Quincey's writings into:—(I.) Writings of Reminiscence, or Descriptive, Biographical, and Historical

Writings; (II.) Speculative, Didactic, and Critical Writings; (III.) Imaginative Writings and Prose-Poetry. It is necessary, above all things, to premise that in De Quincey the three sorts of writing shade continually into each other. Where this difficulty of the constant blending of kinds in one and the same paper is not met by the obvious preponderance of one of the kinds, it may be obviated by naming some papers in more divisions than one. With that understanding, we proceed to a classified synopsis of De Quincey's literary remains:—

I. DESCRIPTIVE, BIOGRAPHICAL, AND HISTORICAL.

The writings of this class may be enumerated and subdivided as follows:—

I. AUTOBIOGRAPHIC:—Specially of this kind are *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and the *Autobiographic Sketches;* but autobiographic matter is dispersed through other papers.

II. BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES OF PERSONS KNOWN TO THE AUTHOR:—Some such are included in the autobiographic writings; but distinct papers of the kind are *Recollections of the Lake Poets, or Sketches of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey*, and the articles entitled *Coleridge and Opium-Eating, Charles Lamb, Professor Wilson, Sir William Hamilton, Walking Stewart, Note on Hazlitt*, and *Dr. Parr, or Whiggism in its Relations to Literature.* All these papers are partly critical. Several papers of the same sort that appeared in magazines have not been reprinted in the Collective British Edition.

III. OTHER BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES:—*Shakespeare* (in Vol. XV.), *Milton* (in Vol. X.), *Pope* (in Vol. XV.), *Richard Bentley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Marquis Wellesley, Last Days of Immanuel Kant* (a digest from the German), *Lessing, Herder, Goethe* (in Vol. XV.), *Schiller.* These also include criticism with biography.

IV. HISTORICAL SKETCHES AND DESCRIPTIONS:—*Homer*

and the Homeridæ, *Philosophy of Herodotus*, *Toilette of the Hebrew Lady* (archæological), *The Cæsars* (in six chapters, forming the greater part of Vol. IX.), *Charlemagne*, *Revolt of the Tartars*, *The Revolution of Greece*, *Modern Greece*, *Ceylon*, *China* (a little essay on the Chinese character, with illustrations), *Modern Superstition*, *Anecdotage*, *French and English Manners*, *Account of the Williams Murders* (the *postscript* to "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts"). In the same sub-class we would include the two important papers entitled *Rhetoric* and *Style*; for, though to a considerable extent critical and didactic, they are, despite their titles, chiefly surveys of Literary History.

V. HISTORICAL SPECULATIONS AND RESEARCHES:—In this class may be included *Cicero*, *The Casuistry of Roman Meals*, *Greece under the Romans*, *Judas Iscariot*, *The Essenes*, *The Pagan Oracles*, *Secret Societies*, *Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and Freemasons*, *Ælius Lamia*.

The two Autobiographic volumes and the volume of Reminiscences of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, are among the best-known of De Quincey's writings. Among the other biographic sketches of persons known to him *Charles Lamb*, *Walking Stewart*, and *Dr. Parr* are those of the highest merit,—the last very severe and satirical, but full of interest and of marked ability. Of the other biographic sketches the ablest and most interesting by far is *Richard Bentley*, a really splendid specimen of biography in miniature. The Encyclopædia article on *Shakespeare*, though somewhat thin, deserves notice for the perfection of its proportions as a summary of what is essential in our information respecting Shakespeare's life. It is not yet superannuated. The similar article on *Pope* is interesting as an expression of De Quincey's generous admiration all in all of a poet whom he treats very severely in detail in some of his critical papers; and it is rare

to meet so neat and workmanlike a little curiosity as the paper on *The Marquis Wellesley*. Of the personal sketches of eminent Germans, that entitled *The Last Days of Immanuel Kant*, though it is only a translated digest from a German original, bears the palm for delicious richness of anecdote and vividness of portraiture. De Quincey's credit in it, except in so far as he shaped and changed and infused life while translating (which was a practice of his), rests on the fact that he was drawn to the subject by his powerful interest in Kant's philosophy, and conceived the happy idea of such a mode of creating among his countrymen a personal affection for the great abstract thinker. Some of the other German sketches, especially *Lessing* and *Herder*, have the same special merit of being early and useful attempts to introduce some knowledge of German thought and literature into England; but the *Goethe*, on all accounts, is discreditable. It exhibits De Quincey at about his very worst; for, though raising the estimate of Goethe's genius that had been announced in the earlier critical paper on his "Wilhelm Meister," it retains something of the malice of that paper.

When we pass to the papers of historical description, it is hardly a surprise to find that it is De Quincey's tendency in such papers to run to disputed or momentous "points" and concentrate the attention on those. A magazine paper did not afford breadth of canvas enough for complete historical representation under such titles as he generally chose. No exception of the kind, indeed, can be taken to his *Revolt of the Tartars*, which is a noble effort of historical painting, done with a sweep and breadth of poetic imagination entitling it, though a history, to rank also among his prose-phantasies. Nor does the remark apply to the *Account of the Williams Murders*, which

beats for ghastly power anything else known in Newgate Calendar literature. But the tendency to "points" is shown in most of the other papers in the same sub-class. Among these *The Philosophy of Herodotus* may be mentioned for its singularly fine appreciation of the Grecian father of History, and *Modern Greece* for its amusing and humorous instructiveness. *Rhetoric* and *Style* are among De Quincey's greatest performances; and, though in them too, considered as sketches of Literary History, the strength runs towards points and specialities, the titles declare that beforehand and indicate what the specialities are. *The Cæsars* is, undoubtedly, his most ambitious attempt, all in all, in the historical department; and he set great store by it himself; but it cannot, I think, take rank among his highest productions. There are striking passages and suggestions in it; but the general effect is too hazy, many of the parts are hurried, and none of the characters of the Emperors stands out with convincing distinctness after that of Julius Cæsar.

Few authors are so difficult to represent by mere extracts as De Quincey, so seldom does he complete a matter within a short space. The following, however, may pass as specimens of him in the descriptive and historical department. The second is excellent and memorable:—

First Sight of Dr. Parr.

Nobody announced him; and we were left to collect his name from his dress and his conversation. Hence it happened that for some time I was disposed to question with myself whether this might not be Mr. Bobus even (little as it could be supposed to resemble *him*), rather than Dr. Parr, so much did he contradict all my rational preconceptions. "A man," said I, "who has insulted people so outrageously ought not to have done this in single reliance upon his professional protections: a brave man,

and a man of honour, would here have carried about with him, in his manner and deportment, some such language as this,—'Do not think that I shelter myself under my gown from the natural consequences of the affronts I offer: mortal combats I am forbidden, sir, as a Christian minister, to engage in; but, as I find it impossible to refrain from occasional licence of tongue, I am very willing to fight a few rounds in a ring with any gentleman who fancies himself ill-used.'" Let me not be misunderstood; I do not contend that Dr. Parr should often, or regularly, have offered this species of satisfaction. But I *do* insist upon it,—that no man should have given the very highest sort of provocation so wantonly as Dr. Parr is recorded to have done, unless conscious that, in a last extremity, he was ready, like a brave man, to undertake a short turn-up, in a private room, with any person whatsoever whom he had insulted past endurance. A doctor who had so often tempted (which is a kind way of saying had *merited*) a cudgelling ought himself to have had some ability to cudgel. Dr. Johnson assuredly would have acted on that principle. Had volume the second of that same folio with which he floored Osburn happened to lie ready to the prostrate man's grasp, nobody can suppose that Johnson would have disputed Osburn's right to retaliate; in which case a regular succession of rounds would have been established. Considerations such as these, and Dr. Parr's undeniable reputation (granted even by his most admiring biographers) as a sanguinary flagellator through his long career of pedagogue, had prepared me,—nay, entitled me,—to expect in Dr. Parr a huge carcase of a man, fourteen stone at the least. Hence, then, my surprise, and the perplexity I have recorded, when the door opened, and a little man, in a most plebeian wig, . . . cut his way through the company, and made for a *fauteuil* standing opposite the fire. Into this he *lunged*; and then forthwith, without preface or apology, began to open his talk upon the room. Here arose a new marvel, and a greater. If I had been scandalized at Dr. Parr's want of thews and bulk, conditions so indispensable for enacting the part of Sam Johnson, much more, and with better reason, was I now petrified with his voice, utterance, gestures, demeanour. Conceive, reader,

by way of counterpoise to the fine classical pronunciation of Dr. Johnson, an infantine lisp,—the worst I ever heard,—from the lips of a man above sixty, and accompanied with all sorts of ridiculous grimaces and little stage gesticulations. As he sat in his chair, turning alternately to the right and to the left, that he might distribute his edification in equal proportions amongst us, he seemed the very image of a little French gossiping abbé. Yet all that I have mentioned was, and seemed to be, a trifle by comparison with the infinite pettiness of his matter. Nothing did he utter but little shreds of calumnious tattle, the most ineffably silly and frivolous of all that was then circulating in the Whig *salons* of London against the Regent. . . . He began precisely in these words: "Oh! I shall tell you" (laying a stress upon the word *shall*, which still further aided the resemblance to a Frenchman) "a sto-hee" (lispingly for story) "about the Pince Wegent" (such was his nearest approximation to *Prince Regent*). "Oh, the Pince Wegent!—the Pince Wegent!—what a sad Pince Wegent!" And so the old babbler went on, sometimes wringing his hands in lamentation, sometimes flourishing them with French grimaces and shrugs of shoulders, sometimes expanding and contracting his fingers like a fan. After an hour's twaddle of this scandalous description, suddenly he rose, and hopped out of the room, exclaiming all the way "*Oh, what a Pince!—Oh, what a Wegent! Is it a Wegent, is it a Pince, that you call this man? Oh, what a sad Pince! Did anybody ever hear of such a sad Pince!—such a sad Wegent—such a sad, sad Pince Wegent? Oh, what a Pince!*" &c., *da capo*. Not without indignation did I exclaim to myself, on this winding up of the scene, "And so this, then, this lithping slandermonger, and retailer of gossip fit rather for washerwomen over their tea than for scholars and statesmen, is the champion whom his party would propound as the adequate antagonist of Samuel Johnson! Faugh!" . . . . Such was my first interview with Dr. Parr; such its issue. And now let me explain my drift in thus detailing its circumstances. Some people will say the drift was doubtless to exhibit Dr. Parr in a disadvantageous light,—as a petty gossiper and a man of mean

personal appearance. No, by no means. Far from it. I, that write this paper, have myself a mean personal appearance; and I love men of mean appearance. . . . Dr. Parr, therefore, lost nothing in *my* esteem by showing a meanish exterior. Yet even this was worth mentioning, and had a value in reference to my present purpose. I like Dr. Parr; I may say even that I *love* him, for some noble qualities of heart that really did belong to him, and were continually breaking out in the midst of his singular infirmities. But this, or a far nobler moral character than Dr. Parr's, can offer no excuse for giving a false elevation to his intellectual pretensions, and raising him to a level which he will be found incapable of keeping when the props of partial friendship are withdrawn.—*Works*, V. 36–43.

SUMMARY VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF GREEK LITERATURE.

There were two groups or clusters of Grecian wits, two deposits or stratifications of the national genius; and these were about a century apart. What makes them specially rememberable is the fact that each of these brilliant clusters had gathered separately about that man as their central pivot who, even apart from this relation to the literature, was otherwise the leading spirit, of his age. . . . Who were they? The one was PERICLES, the other was ALEXANDER OF MACEDON. Except Themistocles, who may be ranked as senior to Pericles by one generation (or thirty-three years), in the whole deduction of Grecian annals no other public man, statesman, captain-general, administrator of the national resources, can be mentioned as approaching to these two men in splendour of reputation, or even in real merit. Pisistratus was too far back; Alcibiades, who might (chronologically speaking) have been the son of Pericles, was too unsteady and (according to Mr. Coleridge's coinage) "unreliable," or perhaps, in more correct English, too "*unrelyuponable*." Thus far our purpose prospers. No man can pretend to forget two such centres as Pericles for the elder group, or Alexander of Macedon (the "strong he-goat" of Jewish prophecy) for the junior. Round these two *foci*, in two different but adjacent centuries, gathered the total starry

heavens, the galaxy, the Pantheon of Grecian intellect. . . . That we may still more severely search the relations in all points between the two systems, let us assign the chronological *locus* of each, because that will furnish another element towards the exact distribution of the chart representing the motion and the oscillations of human genius. Pericles had a very long administration. He was Prime Minister of Athens for upwards of one entire generation. He died in the year 429 before Christ, and in a very early stage of that great Peloponnesian war which was the one sole intestine war for Greece, affecting *every* nook and angle in the land. Now, in this long public life of Pericles, we are at liberty to fix on *any* year as his chronological *locus*. On good reasons, not called for in this place, we fix on the year 444 before Christ. This is too remarkable to be forgotten. *Four, four, four*, what in some games of cards is called a "*prial*" (we presume, by an elision of the first vowel, for *parial*), forms an era which no man can forget. It was the fifteenth year before the death of Pericles, and not far from the bisecting year of his political life. Now, passing to the other system, the *locus* of Alexander is quite as remarkable, as little liable to be forgotten when once indicated, and more easily determined, because selected from a narrower range of choice. The exact chronological *locus* of Alexander is 333 years before Christ. Everybody knows how brief was the career of this great man: it terminated in the year 323 before Christ. But the *annus mirabilis* of his public life, the most effective and productive year throughout his oriental anabasis, was the year 333 before Christ. Here we have another "*prial*," a prial of threes, for the *locus* of Alexander, if properly corrected. Thus far the elements are settled, the chronological longitude and latitude of the two great planetary systems into which the Greek literature breaks up and distributes itself: 444 and 333 are the two central years for the two systems; allowing, therefore, an interspace of 111 years between the *foci* of each. . . . Passing onwards from Pericles, you find that all the rest in *his* system were men in the highest sense creative, absolutely setting the very first example, each in his particular walk of composition; themselves without previous models, and

yet destined every man of them to become models for all after-generations; themselves without fathers or mothers, and yet having all posterity for their children. First come the three men *divini spiritus*, under a heavenly afflatus, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, the creators of Tragedy out of a village mummery; next comes Aristophanes, who breathed the breath of life into Comedy; then comes the great philosopher, Anaxagoras, who first theorized successfully on man and the world. Next come, whether great or not, the still more *famous* philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Xenophon; then comes, leaning upon Pericles, as sometimes Pericles leaned upon *him*, the divine artist, Phidias; and behind this immortal man walk Herodotus and Thucydides. What a procession to Eleusis would these men have formed! what a frieze, if some great artist could arrange it as dramatically as Chaucer has arranged the Pilgrimage to Canterbury! . . . Now, let us step on a hundred years forward. We are now within hail of Alexander, and a brilliant consistory of Grecian men that is by which *he* is surrounded. There are now exquisite masters of the more refined comedy; there are, again, great philosophers, for all the great schools are represented by able successors; and, above all others, there is the one philosopher who played with men's minds (according to Lord Bacon's comparison) as freely as ever his princely pupil with their persons,—there is Aristotle. There are great orators; and, above all others, there is that orator whom succeeding generations (wisely or not) have adopted as the representative name for what is conceivable as oratorical perfection,—there is Demosthenes. Aristotle and Demosthenes are in themselves bulwarks of power; many hosts lie in those two names. For artists, again, to range against Phidias, there is Lysippus the sculptor, and there is Apelles the painter; for great captains and masters of strategic art, there is Alexander himself, with a glittering *cortége* of general officers, well qualified to wear the crowns which they will win, and to head the dynasties which they will found. Historians there are now, as in that former age; and, upon the whole, it cannot be denied that the "turn-out" is showy and imposing. . . . Before comparing the second "deposit" (geologically speaking) of Grecian genius with the

first, let us consider what it was (if anything) that connected them. Here, reader, we would wish to put a question. Saving your presence, Did you ever see what is called a dumb-bell? *We* have; and know it by more painful evidence than that of sight. You, therefore, O reader! if personally cognisant of dumb-bells, we will remind, if not, we will inform, that it is a cylindrical bar of iron or lead, issuing at each end in a globe of the same metal, and usually it is sheathed in green baize. . . . Now, reader, it is under this image of the dumb-bell that we couch our allegory. Those globes at each end are the two systems or separate clusters of Greek literature; and that cylinder which connects them is the long man that ran into each system, binding the two together. Who was that? It was Isocrates. *Great* we cannot call him in conscience; and therefore, by way of compromise, we call him *long*, which, in one sense, he certainly was; for he lived through four-and-twenty Olympiads, each containing four solar years. He narrowly escaped being a hundred years old; and, though that did not carry him from centre to centre, yet, as each system might be supposed to protend a radius each way of twenty years, he had, in fact, a full personal cognisance (and pretty equally) of the two systems, remote as they were, which composed the total world of Grecian genius. . . . Now then, reader, you have arrived at that station from which you overlook the whole of Greek literature, as a few explanations will soon convince you. Where is Homer? where is Hesiod? you ask; where is Pindar? Homer and Hesiod lived 1000 years B.C., or, by the lowest computation, near 900. For anything that we know, they may have lived with Tubal Cain. At all events, they belong to no power or agency that set in motion the age of Pericles, or that operated on that age. Pindar, again, was a solitary emanation of some unknown influences, at Thebes, more than five hundred years before Christ. He may be referred to the same age as Pythagoras. These are all that can be cited *before* Pericles. Next, for the ages *after* Alexander, it is certain that Greece Proper was so much broken in spirit by the loss of her autonomy, dating from that era, as never again to have rallied sufficiently to produce a single man of genius,—not one solitary writer who

acted as a power upon the national mind. Callimachus was nobody, and not decidedly Grecian. Theocritus, a man of real genius in a limited way, is a Grecian in that sense only according to which an Anglo-American is an Englishman. Besides that, one swallow does not make a summer. Of any other writers, above all others of Menander, apparently a man of divine genius, we possess only a few wrecks; and of Anacreon, who must have been a poet of original power, we do not certainly know that we have even any wrecks. Of those which pass under his name not merely the authorship, but the era, is very questionable indeed. Plutarch and Lucian, the unlearned reader must understand, both belong to post-Christian ages. And, for all the Greek emigrants who may have written histories, such as we now value for their matter more than for their execution, one and all, they belong too much to Roman civilization that we should ever think of connecting them with native Greek literature. Polybius in the days of the second Scipio, Dion Cassius and Appian in the acmé of Roman civility, are no more Grecian authors because they wrote in Greek than the Emperors Marcus Antoninus and Julian were other than Romans because, from monstrous coxcombry, they chose to write in Greek their barren memoranda.—*Works*, X. 242-255.

It would be hopeless to seek to represent by extracts, even in this inadequate fashion, that very characteristic portion of De Quincey's writings of the generally historical kind which we have called his Historical Speculations and Researches. They must be read in their integrity. *The Casuistry of Roman Meals*, *Cicero*, *Judas Iscariot*, *The Essenes*, and *The Pagan Oracles*, may be especially recommended. They are admirable specimens of his boldness and acuteness in questioning received historical beliefs, and of his ingenuity in working out novelties or paradoxes. The drift of *The Casuistry of Roman Meals* is that the Romans, and indeed the ancients generally, had no such regular meal early in the day as our modern breakfast, and that a whole coil of important social conse-

quences depended on that one fact. In his *Cicero* he propounds a view of his own as to the character of the famous Roman orator and wit and his function in the struggle between Cæsar and Pompey. The paradox in *Judas Iscariot* is that Judas was not the vulgar traitor of the popular conception, but a headstrong fanatic, who, having missed the true spiritual purport of Christ's mission, and attached himself to Christ in the expectation of a political revolution to be effected by Christ's assumption of a temporal kingship or championship of the Jewish race, had determined to precipitate matters by leaving Christ no room for hesitation or delay. In *The Essenes* the attempt is to show that there was no real or independent sect of that name among the Jews, all the confusion to the contrary having originated in a rascally invention of the historian Josephus. In *The Pagan Oracles* there is a contradiction of the tradition of a sudden paralysis of the Pagan ritual on the first appearance of Christianity, and a castigation of the early Christian writers for having invented the pious lie.

II. SPECULATIVE, DIDACTIC, AND CRITICAL.

While a speculative and critical element is discernible in almost all the papers now dismissed as in the main biographical or historical, and while some of the historical papers were regarded by De Quincey himself as typical examples of the speculative essay, it is of a different set of his papers that our classification obliges us to take account under the present heading. They also fall into subdivisions:—

I. METAPHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL:—In this subdivision, itself composite, but answering to what passes under the name of PHILOSOPHY in a general sense, may be

included the following:—*System of the Heavens as revealed by Lord Rosse's Telescopes;* various papers or portions of papers relating to Kant, e. g. part of the *Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been neglected,* the paper entitled *Kant in his Miscellaneous Essays,* and the translation of Kant's *Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan;* the scraps entitled *Dreaming* and *The Palimpsest of the Human Brain,* in the "Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" (Vol. XVI.); some of the scraps in the "Notes from the Pocket-Book of a Late Opium-Eater," e. g. *On Suicide;* and the articles entitled *Plato's Republic, Glance at the Works of Mackintosh, Casuistry, On War, National Temperance Movements, Presence of Mind,* and *The Juggernaut of Social Life.*

II. THEOLOGICAL:—*Protestantism, Miracles as Subjects of Testimony, On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement,* and *Memorial Chronology on a new and more apprehensible system.* This last, included in Vol. XVI., is an unfinished paper, posthumously published from the author's manuscript; and it contains little more than a clever and humorous introduction, in the form of an address to a young lady, with the beginning of what was intended to be a piece of Biblical Criticism.

III. ENGLISH POLITICS:—*A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism; On the Political Parties of Modern England; Falsification of English History.*

IV. POLITICAL ECONOMY:—*Logic of Political Economy; Dialogues of Three Templars on Political Economy;* the scraps entitled *Malthus* and *Measure of Value* in the "Notes from the Pocket-Book of a Late Opium-Eater"; and the article entitled *California.*

V. LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM:—The large essays entitled *Rhetoric* and *Style* may be here noted again; and there may be associated with them, as expositions of general literary theory, the *Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been neglected,* and the article entitled *Language* (which, despite the title, is really on Style). The more special articles of the same sort form a numerous series. Arranged in the

chronological order of their subjects, they are as follows:—*Theory of Greek Tragedy*, *The Antigone of Sophocles*, and *The Theban Sphinx*; *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth*; the short critical paper entitled *Milton* (in Vol. VI.), and the other entitled *Milton versus Southey and Landor* (in Vol. XI.); the review entitled *Schlosser's Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*; the two critical articles on Pope, entitled *Alexander Pope* (in Vol. VIII.) and *Lord Carlisle on Pope* (in Vol. XII.); the article *Oliver Goldsmith* (slightly biographical, but chiefly critical); the paper on Carlyle's Translation of Wilhelm Meister, reprinted under the title *Goethe Reflected in his Novel of Wilhelm Meister*, with omission of the remarks on the translator (in Vol. XII.); the sketch *John Paul Frederick Richter*, prefixed to the translated "Analects from Richter" (in Vol. XIII.); the essay *On Wordsworth's Poetry*; the *Notes on Godwin and Foster*, the slight little paper entitled *John Keats*, and the *Notes on Walter Savage Landor*. To these may be added *Orthographic Mutineers*, *The Art of Conversation*, the scrap *Walladmor*, and one or two of the scraps called "Notes from the Pocket-Book of a Late Opium-Eater."

To the harder varieties of speculative Philosophy, it will be observed, De Quincey has contributed less of an original kind than might have been expected from his known private passion for metaphysical studies. If we except his *System of the Heavens*, which hints metaphysical ideas in the form of a splendid cosmological vision, and his *Palimpsest of the Human Brain*, which is full of psychological suggestion, he seems to have satisfied himself in this department by reports from Kant and recommendations of Kant to English attention. The accuracy of some of his statements about Kant, and indeed of his knowledge of Kant, has been called in question of late; but it remains to his credit that, in a singularly bleak and vapid period of the native British philosophizing, he had

contracted such an admiration, all in all, for the great German transcendentalist. His translation of Kant's *Idea of a Universal History* was a feat in itself. That essay remains to this day the clearest argument for the possibility of a Science of History since Vico propounded the *Scienza Nuova;* and to have perceived the importance of such an essay in the year 1824 was to be in possession of a philosophical notion of great value long before it was popular in Britain. That De Quincey contented himself so much with mere accounts of Kant personally, and literary glimpses of the nature of his speculations, may have been due to the fact that original philosophizing of the metaphysical and psychological kinds was not wanted in magazines and would not pay. He made amends, however, as our list will have shown, by a considerable quantity of writing on subjects of Speculative Ethics. His best essay of this kind is that entitled *Casuistry.* It was a favourite idea of De Quincey's that Moral Philosophy in recent times, especially in Protestant countries, has run too much upon generalities, avoiding too much those very *cases* of constant recurrence in life about which difficulties are likely to arise in practical conduct. Accordingly, in this essay, there is a discussion of duelling and the laws of honour, the legitimacy of suicide, proper behaviour to servants, the limits of the rule of veracity, &c., &c., all with lively historical illustrations. In the paper *On War* the necessary permanence of that agency in the world is asserted strongly, and a certain character of nobleness and beneficence claimed for it. There is less of dissent from current philanthropy in the article on *Temperance Movements;* but it will not give entire satisfaction. The article on *Plato's Republic* is a virulent attack upon a philosopher towards whom we should have expected to see De Quincey

standing in an attitude of discipleship and veneration. This is owing chiefly to De Quincey's disgust with the moral heresies, in the matter of marriage and the like, on which Plato so coolly professes to found his imaginary commonwealth; and it is possible that, had he been treating Plato in respect of the sum-total of his philosophic and literary merits, we should have had a much more admiring estimate. As it is, one has to pity De Quincey rather than Plato in this unfortunate interview. He looks as petulant and small in his attack on Plato as he did in his attack on Goethe.

The expressly theological papers of De Quincey, with passages innumerable through his other writings, show that he took his stand on established Christian orthodoxy. He avowed his belief in a miraculous revelation from God to mankind, begun and continued in the history of the Jewish race, and consummated in the life of Christ and in the diffusion of Christianity by the Apostles. As a reasoned piece of Christian apologetics his answer to Hume's argument, entitled *Miracles as Subjects of Testimony*, does not seem to have won much regard from theologians, and, though very subtle, is certainly deficient in the homely quality which Hobbes called *bite*. His own religious faith, indeed appears to have been very much of the nature of an inherited sentiment, independent of reasoning, and which he would not let reasoning disturb. In one respect, too, his theology was of what many theologians now would call a narrow and old-fashioned kind. There is no trace in him of that notion of a universal religious inspiration among the nations, and so of a certain respectability, greater or less, in all mythologies, which has been fostered by the modern science of religions. On the contrary, Christianity is with him

the single divine revelation in the world, and he thinks and speaks of the Pagan religions, in the style of the old-fashioned theology, as simply false religions, horrid religions, inventions of the spirit of evil. How this is to be reconciled with his wide range of historical sympathy, and especially with his admiration of the achievements of the Greek intellect and the grandeur of the Roman character, it might be difficult to say. Probably it was because he distinguished between those noble and admirable developments which human nature could work out for itself, and which therefore belong to humanity as such, and the more rare and spiritual possibilities which he believed actual revelation had woven into the web of humanity, and which were to be regarded as gifts from the supernatural. At all events, the matter stands as has been stated. In the same way, Mahometanism figures in his regard as of little worth, monotheistic certainly and therefore superior to the Pagan creeds, but a spurious religion and partly stolen. Further, De Quincey's Christianity declares itself as deliberately of the Protestant species. With much respect for Roman Catholicism, he yet repudiates it as in great measure a corruption of the original system, which original system he finds reproduced in the Protestantism of the sixteenth century. His article entitled *Protestantism* is an exposition of his views in that matter, and is altogether a very able and important paper. If he has seemed narrow hitherto in his philosophy of religion, here, once within the bounds of his Protestantism, and engaged in defining Protestantism, he becomes broad enough. "The self-sufficingness of the Bible and the right of private judgment" are, he maintains, "the two great characters in which Protestantism commences," and the doctrines by which it distinguishes itself from the Church

of Rome. Bound up in these doctrines, he maintains, is the duty of absolute religious toleration; and by this principle of absolute religious toleration, the right of the individual to think, print, and publish what he pleases, he abides with exemplary fidelity through all his writings, even while in skirmish with the free-thinkers for whom he has the strongest personal disgust. But this is not all. He abjures *Bibliolatry*, or that kind of respect for the letter of the Bible which is founded on the notion of verbal inspiration, denying it to be a necessary tenet of Protestantism, or to be possible indeed for any scholarly understanding. It is not only, he maintains, that the notion of literal or verbal inspiration is broken down at once by recollection of the corruptions of the original text of the Scriptures, their various readings, and the fact that it is only in translations that the Scriptures exist for the masses of mankind in all countries. He addresses himself more emphatically to the alleged palpable errors in the substance and teachings of the Bible, its violations of history and chronology, its inconsistencies with modern science. Here he refuses at once that method of reconciling science with Scripture which proceeds by torture of texts into meanings different from those which they bore to the Hebrews or the Greeks who first read them. His bold principle is that Science and the Bible cannot be reconciled in such matters, and that the desire to reconcile them indicates a most gross and carnal misconception of the very idea of a divine revelation. The principle may be given in his own words:—

> It is an obligation resting upon the Bible, if it is to be consistent with itself, that it should *refuse* to teach science; and, if the Bible ever *had* taught any one art, science, or process of

life, it would have been asked, Is a divine mission abandoned suddenly for a human mission? By what caprice is this one science taught, and others not? Or these two, suppose, and not all? But an objection even deadlier would have followed. It is clear as is the purpose of daylight that the whole body of the arts and sciences comprises one vast machinery for the irritation and development of the human intellect. For this end they exist. To see God, therefore, descending into the arena of science, and contending, as it were, for his own prizes, by teaching science in the Bible, would be to see him intercepting from their self-evident destination (viz., man's intellectual benefit) his own problems by solving them himself. No spectacle could more dishonour the divine idea, could more injure man under the mask of aiding him. *The Bible must not teach anything that man can teach himself.*

The revelation of the Old and New Testaments is to be regarded, then, according to De Quincey, as a leaven of truths purely moral and spiritual, sent into the world by miracle precisely because man could never have found them out for himself, with a careful abstinence from any mixture of matter of ordinary knowledge in advance of what was already existent, and therefore with an adoption of all existing historical and scientific phrases and traditions. Hence *Bibliolatry*, in the sense of a belief in the immaculate correctness of the language and statements of the Bible on all subjects whatsoever, was no tenet of genuine Christianity, secure as every Christian ought to be that, whatever changes of conception on such subjects as the antiquity of the human race, or the system of the physical universe, might come with the progress of the human intelligence, the supernatural leaven would impregnate them as they came, and go on working. In this doctrine, of which De Quincey seems to have meditated a particular application in his unfinished papers entitled "*Memorial Chronology*," he was substantially at one with

Coleridge and Wordsworth. He was at one with them, too, in his affection for Church-Establishments. In remarkable difference from his favourite Milton, who regarded the incorporation of Church and State as the cause of the vitiation of the supernatural leaven in the world, and scowled back with hatred on the Emperor Constantine as the beginner of that mischief, De Quincey confessed to a special kindness for Constantine, precisely because that Emperor had conceived the idea of converting Christianity into a political agency. It was Constantine who had carried Christian teaching into effect in such institutions as hospitals and public provision for the poor; and the prospects of the world for the future were bound up with the possible extensions of the political influence of Christianity in similar directions. That is the subject of the essay entitled *On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement.* In short, De Quincey is to be remembered, in his religious relations, as a staunch Church-of-England man of the broad school, not given to High-Church sacerdotalism, though with an æsthetic liking in his own case for a comely ritual.

In politics De Quincey was an English Tory. In the two papers entitled *A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism*, and *On the Political Parties of Modern England*, he avows his partisanship. Toryism asserts itself also in the article on Dr. Parr, and tinges some of the other papers. It is interesting, indeed, to observe how much of the "John Bull element," as Mr. Page calls it, there was, all in all, in the feeble little man. His patriotism was of the old type of the days of Pitt and Nelson. He exulted in the historic glories of England and her imperial ascendency in so many parts of the

globe, and would have had her do battle for any punctilio of honour, as readily as for any more visible interest, in her dealings with foreigners. He had a good deal of the old English anti-Gallican prejudice; and, though he has done justice, over and over again, to some of the finer characteristics of the French, the total effect of his remarks on the French, politically and intellectually, is irritating to the admirers of that great nation. He knew them only through books or by casual observation of stray Frenchmen he met; for he was never out of the British Islands, and never experienced that sudden awakening of a positive affection for the French which comes infallibly from even a single visit to their lightsome capital. On the other hand, though Scotland was his home for so large a part of his life, he seems never to have contracted the least sympathy with anything distinctively Scottish. Even his Toryism was specially English or South-British. But, like all other parts of his creed, his Toryism was of a highly intellectual kind, with features of its own. In such questions, for example, as that of the continuance of flogging and other brutal forms of punishment in the army and navy and elsewhere, he parted company with the ordinary mass of Tories, leaving his curse with them in that particular, and went with the current of Radical sentiment and opinion. How far he was carried, by his candour of intellect and depth and accuracy of scholarship, from the ordinary rut of party commonplace, may be judged also from his little paper entitled *Falsification of English History*. It is a gallant little paper, and one of the best rebukes in our language to that systematic vilification of the Puritan Revolution, the English Commonwealth, and the Reign of Cromwell, which has come down in the Anglican mind as an inheritance from

the Restoration, and still vulgarises so much of our scholarship and our literature.

The *Dialogues of the Three Templars* and the *Logic of Political Economy* are De Quincey's chief contributions to the literature of Economic Science. As to the literary deftness of the essay and the treatise there is no doubt. For cutting lucidity of exposition and beauty of style they are to be envied by most writers on Political Economy. This seems to have been felt by Mr. John Stuart Mill, who mentions De Quincey with respect, and uses quotations from him thankfully, in parts of his standard work. The question rather is whether De Quincey has any title, such as he himself seemed to claim, to the character of an original thinker in the matter of the science. Mr. Mill's language in one place appears to negative this claim, though very gently; and the question has been reopened, in De Quincey's interest, by Mr. Shadworth Hodgson in an essay entitled "De Quincey as Political Economist." Enough here on that matter.

If De Quincey surpasses himself anywhere in his didactic papers, it is in those that concern Literary Theory and Criticism. No English writer has left a finer body of disquisition on the science and principles of Literature than will be found in De Quincey's general papers entitled *Rhetoric*, *Style*, and *Language*, and his *Letters to a Young Man*, together with his more particular articles entitled *Theory of Greek Tragedy*, *The Antigone of Sophocles*, *Milton*, *Milton versus Southey and Landor*, *Alexander Pope*, *Lord Carlisle on Pope*, *Schlosser's Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, and *On Wordsworth's Poetry*. There, or elsewhere in De Quincey, will be found the last word, so far as there can be a last word, on some of the most important questions of style or

literary art, and a treatment of literary questions throwing back into mere obsolete ineptitude the literary theories of such masters of the eighteenth century as Addison and Johnson, and of such of their successors as the acute Jeffrey and the robust but coarse-grained Whately. Goethe, the greatest literary critic that ever lived, was more comprehensive and universally tolerant; but De Quincey was *facile princeps*, to the extent of his touch, among the English critics of his generation. He acknowledged that he had received some of his leading ideas in literary art from Wordsworth originally; but whatever he derived from Wordsworth was matured by so much independent reflection, and so modified by the peculiarities of his own temperament, that the result was a system of precepts differing from Wordsworth's in not a few points.

One of the best known of De Quincey's critical maxims is his distinction, after Wordsworth, between the Literature of Knowledge, which he would call Literature only by courtesy, and the Literature of Power, which alone he regarded as Literature proper. My belief is that the distinction has been overworked in the form in which De Quincey put it forth, and that it would require a great deal of re-explication and modification to bring it into defensible and permanent shape. As it would be unpardonable, however, to omit this De Quinceyism in a sketch of De Quincey's opinions, here is one of the passages in which he expounds it:—

THE LITERATURE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE LITERATURE OF POWER.

In that great social organ which, collectively, we call Literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices that may blend and often do so, but capable, severally, of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for reciprocal repulsion. There is, first, the

literature of *knowledge*, and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is to *teach;* the function of the second is to *move:* the first is a rudder, the second an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls *dry* light; but, proximately, it does and must operate, else it ceases to be a literature of *power*, in and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering iris of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. Men have so little reflected on the higher functions of literature as to find it a paradox if one should describe it as a mean or subordinate purpose of books to give information. But this is a paradox only in the sense which makes it honourable to be paradoxical. Whenever we talk in ordinary language of seeking information or gaining knowledge, we understand the words as connected with something of absolute novelty. But it is the grandeur of all truth which *can* occupy a very high place in human interests that it is never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds: it exists eternally by way of germ or latent principle in the lowest as in the highest, needing to be developed, but never to be planted. To be capable of transplantation is the immediate criterion of a truth that ranges on a lower scale. Besides which, there is a rarer thing than truth,—namely, *power*, or deep sympathy with truth. . . . Were it not that human sensibilities are ventilated and continually called out into exercise by the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life as it moves through chance and change, or of literature as it recombines these elements in the mimicries of poetry, romance, &c., it is certain that, like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually drop and dwindle. It is in relation to these great *moral* capacities of man that the literature of power, as contradistinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action. It is concerned with what is highest in man; for the Scriptures themselves never condescended to deal, by suggestion or co-operation, with the mere discursive under-

standing: when speaking of man in his intellectual capacity, the Scriptures speak not of the understanding, but of "*the understanding heart*,"—making the heart, *i. e.* the great intuitive (or non-discursive) organ, to be the interchangeable formula for man in his highest state of capacity for the infinite. Tragedy, romance, fairy tale, or epopee, all alike restore to man's mind the ideals of justice, of hope, of truth, of mercy, of retribution, which else (left to the support of daily life in its realities) would languish for want of sufficient illustration. . . . Hence the pre-eminency over all authors that merely *teach* of the meanest that *moves*, or that teaches, if at all, indirectly by moving. The very highest work that has ever existed in the literature of knowledge is but a *provisional* work, a book upon trial and sufferance, and *quamdiu bene se gesserit*. Let its teaching be even partially revised, let it be but expanded, nay, let its teaching be but placed in a better order, and instantly it is superseded. Whereas the feeblest works in the literature of power, surviving at all, survive as finished and unalterable amongst men. For instance, the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was a book *militant* on earth from the first. In all stages of its progress it would have to fight for its existence,—first, as regards absolute truth; secondly, when that combat was over, as regards its form or mode of presenting the truth. And, as soon as a La Place, or anybody else, builds higher upon the foundations laid by this book, effectually he throws it out of the sunshine into decay and darkness; by weapons even from this book he superannuates and destroys this book, so that soon the name of Newton remains as a mere *nominis umbra*, but his book, as a living power, has transmigrated into other forms. Now, on the contrary, the *Iliad*, the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, the *Othello* or *King Lear*, the *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, or the *Paradise Lost*, are not militant, but triumphant for ever, as long as the languages exist in which they speak or can be taught to speak. They never *can* transmigrate into new incarnations. To reproduce *them* in new forms or variations, even if in some things they should be improved, would be to plagiarize. A good steam-engine is properly superseded by a better. But one lovely pastoral valley is not super-

seded by another, nor a statue of Praxiteles by a statue of Michael Angelo.—*Works*, viii. 5—9.

III. IMAGINATIVE WRITINGS AND PROSE POETRY.

In this class may be reckoned the following:—

I. HUMOROUS EXTRAVAGANZAS:—The paragon in this kind is, of course, *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts.* There are, however, occasional passages of frolicsome invention through the other papers; and the entire paper *Sortilege and Astrology* may be taken as a *jeu d'esprit* of the same sort.

II. INCIDENTS OF REAL LIFE AND PASSAGES OF HISTORY TREATED IMAGINATIVELY:—In addition to the poetic versions of incidents from real life that are interwrought with the expressly autobiographic writings, there ought to be mentioned specially the paper entitled *Early Memorials of Grasmere.* It is the story of the loss of two peasants, a husband and his wife, among the hills, during a snowstorm in the Lake District, in the year 1807. In the same group, on grounds of literary principle, may be reckoned the story called *The Spanish Military Nun* and the paper entitled *Joan of Arc.* As has been already hinted, *The Revolt of the Tartars* might rank in the same high company.

III. NOVELETTES AND ROMANCES:—Chief among these is De Quincey's one-volume novel or romance, *Klosterheim*, published in 1832, and unfortunately not included in the edition of his collected works, nor accessible at present in any form, to any of her Majesty's subjects, except by importation of an American reprint. In connexion with this independent attempt in prose-fiction, we may remember the short story or novelette called *The Avenger* (reprinted in vol. xvi. from *Blackwood's Magazine* of 1838) and *Walladmor*, the pseudo-Waverley Novel of 1824, which De Quincey translated from the German. There are, besides, some novelettes from the German, reprinted in the collective edition.

IV. PROSE PHANTASIES AND LYRICS:—Although De Quincey ranked the whole of his *Confessions* as properly an example of that "mode of impassioned prose" in which he thought there had been few or no precedents in English, it is enough here to

remember those parts of the *Confessions* which may be distinguished as "dream phantasies." To be added, under our present heading (besides passages in the *Autobiographic Sketches*), are *The Daughter of Lebanon*, the extraordinary paper in three parts called *The English Mail Coach*, and the little cluster of fragments called *Suspiria de Profundis* (i. e., "Sighs from the Depths"), *being a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. In fact, however, only three of the six fragments there gathered under the common name of "Suspiria" are either "lyrics" or "phantasies," the rest being critical or psychological. The three entitled to a place here are those entitled *Levana and our Ladies of Sorrow*, *Savannah-la-Mar*, and *Memorial Suspiria*.

The celebrity of the essay *On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts* is not surprising. The ghastly originality of the conception, the humorous irony with which it is sustained by stroke after stroke, and the mad frenzy of the closing scene, where the assembled club of amateurs in murder, with Toad-in-the-hole leading them, drink their toasts and sing their chorus in honour of certain superlative specimens of their favourite art, leave an impression altogether exceptional, as of pleasure mixed illegitimately with the forbidden and horrible. For a lighter and more genial specimen of De Quincey in his whimsical vein, *Sortilege and Astrology* may be cordially recommended. To pass from such papers to *Early Memorials of Grasmere*, *The Spanish Military Nun*, and *Joan of Arc*, gives one a fresh idea of the versatility of his powers. The first, describing winter among the English Lakes, and telling the tragic story of George and Sarah Green, and of the bravery of their little girl left in charge of the cottage to which they were never to return alive, has all the mournful beauty of a commemorative prose-poem. The

second, which is a narrative, from historical materials, of the adventures of a daring Spanish girl, in man's disguise, first in Spain and then in the Spanish parts of the new world, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, is in De Quincey's most characteristic style of mingled humour and earnestness, and has all the fascination of one of the best of the Spanish *picaresque* romances. The paper on Joan of Arc, though brief, is nobly perfect. "What is to be thought of *her?* What "is to be thought of the poor shepherd girl from the hills "and forests of Lorraine, that, like the Hebrew shepherd "boy from the hills and forests of Judea, rose suddenly "out of the quiet, out of the safety, out of the religious "inspiration, rooted in deep pastoral solitudes, to a station "in the van of armies, and to the more perilous station at "the right hand of kings?" Opening in this strain of poetic solemnity, the paper maintains the same high tone throughout; and, if it does not leave the question answered by enshrining the image of the Maid of Orleans in a sufficient vision of glory, there is no such answer in the English language.

De Quincey included in his collected works two short tales of clever humour, called *The Incognito, or Count Fitzhum*, and *The King of Hayti*, and a third, called *The Dice*, a short story of devilry and black art, describing the first as "translated from the German of Dr. Schultze," and the other two merely as "from the German." Passing these and a fourth tale, called *The Fatal Marksman*, which is somewhat in the style of the third, and seems also to be from the German (though that is not stated), we have, as the single original novelette of De Quincey among the collected works, the strange piece called *The Avenger*. It is a story, wholly fantastic and

sensational, but quite in De Quincey's vein, of a series of appalling and mysterious murders supposed to happen in a German town in the year 1816, and of the astounding discovery at last that they have all been the work of a certain magnificent youth, Maximilian Wyndham, of mixed English and Jewish descent, and of immense wealth, who had come to reside in the town, in the house of one of the University professors, with high Russian credentials and universal acceptance among the citizens. He had come thither nominally to complete his studies, but really in pursuit of a secret scheme of vengeance upon those of the inhabitants who had been concerned in certain deadly injuries and dishonours done to his family, and especially to his Jewish mother. The story does not appear to have been much read; and admirers of De Quincey may judge from this description of it whether it is worth looking up. It may be even more necessary to give some account of *Klosterheim, or the Masque*.

As originally published by Blackwood in 1832, it was a small prettily-printed volume of 305 pages, without De Quincey's name after the title, but only the words "By the English Opium-Eater." It would make about half a volume in the collective edition of the works, were it included there.

The scene of the story is an imaginary German city, Klosterheim, with its forest-neighbourhood; and the time is the winter of 1633, with part of the year 1634, or just at that point of the great Thirty Years' War when, after the death of Gustavus-Adolphus, his Swedish generals are maintaining the war against the Imperialists, and all Germany is in confusion and misery with the marchings and counter-marchings, the ravagings and counter-ravagings, of the opposed armies. The Klosterheimers, as good

Catholics, are mainly in sympathy with the Imperialists, but are in the peculiar predicament of being subject to a gloomy and tyrannical Landgrave, who, though a bigoted Roman Catholic, has reasons of his own for cultivating the Swedish alliance, and is in fact in correspondence with the Swedes. A leading spirit among them, and especially among the University students, is a certain splendid soldier-youth, Maximilian, a stranger from a distance. So, when the Klosterheimers are in excitement over the approach to their city, through the forest, of a travelling mass of pilgrims, under Imperialist convoy, all the way from Vienna, and over the chances that the poor pilgrims may be attacked and cut to pieces by a certain brutal Holkerstein, the head of a host of marauders who prowl through the forest, who but this Maximilian is the man to execute the general desire of Klosterheim by evading the orders of the cruel Landgrave and carrying armed aid to the pilgrims? Well that he has done so; for in the midst of the pilgrim-cavalcade, and the chief personage in it, is his own lady-love, the noble Paulina, a relative of the Emperor, and entrusted by him with despatches. The lovers meet; and, save for a night-alarm, in the course of which the portmanteau of secret despatches is abstracted by robbers from Lady Paulina's carriage, there is no accident till the pilgrims are close to Klosterheim. There, in the night-time, Holkerstein and his host of marauders do fall upon them. There is a dreadful night-battle; and, though the marauding host is beaten off, chiefly by the heroic valour of Maximilian, it is but a wreck of the pilgrim-army that enters Klosterheim on the morrow,—and then alas! without Maximilian among them. He has been carried away by the marauders, a wounded prisoner. The residue of the poor pilgrims are dispersed through the city somehow for hospitality,

and the doleful Lady Paulina takes up her abode in the great abbey, close to the Landgrave's palace. Then, for a while, we are among the Klosterheimers, and called upon to pity them. For the gloomy Landgrave, always a tyrant, now revels in acts of tyranny and cruelty utterly indiscriminate and capricious, maddened by the goad of some new motive, which is not explained, but which we connect with intelligence he has obtained from the abstracted imperial despatches. There are arrests of students and citizens; all are in consternation; no one knows what will happen next. Suddenly, however, a counter-agency is at work in Klosterheim, baffling and bewildering the Landgrave and his wily Italian minister Adorni. This is a certain mysterious being, whether human or supernatural no one can tell, who calls himself "The Masque," and seems omnipresent and resistless. He appears when and where he likes, passes through bolts and bars, leaves messages to the Landgrave nailed up in public places, and defies his police. Houses are entered; citizens disappear, sometimes with signs of scuffle and bloodshed left in their rooms; and, as these victims of "The Masque" are not exclusively from the ranks of the Landgrave's partisans, it becomes doubtful whether the mysterious being has any political purpose, or is a mere demon of general malignity. But, evidently, the Landgrave is his main mark; and it is in the palace of the Landgrave that he makes his presence and his power most daringly felt. How, for example, he appeared there at a great masked ball, to which exactly twelve hundred persons had been invited by numbered tickets; how, when the twelve hundred had been, by arrangement, counted off in the hall, and aggregated apart, he was seen in majestic and solitary composure, leaning against a marble column, and

it seemed as if the Landgrave and Adorni had but to give the word to their myrmidons to clutch him; but how there was nothing of that expected catastrophe, but only a scornful disappearance of the awful figure, as if in cloud or smoke, after some words from his hollow voice which left the Landgrave trembling:—for all this, and much more, there must be application inside the little volume itself. In reading it, you are as if in the heart of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, with the usual paraphernalia of cloaks, nodding plumes, ghostly sounds, labyrinthine corridors and secret passages, pictures of ancestors on the walls, and the rest of it; and you long to be out of such a curiosity-shop of jumbled incredibilities, and to know the *dénouement*. That does not come till after new episodes of danger to Lady Paulina, new coils of marvel round the mysterious "Masque," and a second great assembly in the palace, with a vast mechanism of new preparations by the infuriated Landgrave for the discomfiture of his adversary. Let these be supposed; and let it be supposed that the 6th of September, 1634, has passed, and that the Swedes have been routed and the Imperialists triumphant in the great battle of Nördlingen. What need then for further mystery? The hour has come for that revolution in Klosterheim which the Emperor himself had devised from Vienna, and manipulated in the secret despatches he had sent by the Lady Paulina. All is revealed in a crash. Maximilian is the true Landgrave, the hitherto undivulged son of the last good Landgrave; and the present usurper had come to his power by the murder of Maximilian's father, and maintained it by other crimes. In the crash of this revelation the gloomy usurper sinks, the last blow to the wretched man being the death of his daughter by a mistake of his own murderous

order for the execution of the Lady Paulina. Maximilian marries Paulina; there are other more minute solutions and surprises; and the Klosterheimers, under their new Landgrave, are again a happy people. But who was the mysterious "Masque"? Who but Maximilian himself? Trap-doors and subterranean passages, his own dexterity, and collusion with the requisite number of citizens and students, and with an old seneschal of the tyrant, had done the whole business; and the only blood really shed in the course of it had been that of the poor seneschal, betrayed by accident, and stabbed by his master.

Such is De Quincey's one-volume romance, a poor performance, doubtless for the sake of a little money, about the time when he settled in Edinburgh. Was he ashamed of it afterwards, that he did not reprint it? There was no necessity for that; for, though the story does not show the craft of a Sir Walter Scott, it is by no means bad of its preposterous kind. The style, at all events, is remarkably careful, with a marble beauty of sentence that makes one linger as one reads.

There remains to be noticed, in the last place, that very special portion of De Quincey's writings of the imaginative order for which he claimed distinction above the rest, as illustrating "a mode of impassioned prose" but slightly represented before in English Literature. It may be questioned, however, whether the pieces for which he claimed this distinction are described most exactly by the phrase "impassioned prose." Their peculiarity is not so much that they are impassioned in any ordinary sense as that they are imaginative or poetical after a very definite and rather rare sort. It was one of the distinctions of De Quincey's intellect that it could

pass from that ordinary or discursive exercise of itself which consists in expounding, reasoning, or investigating, to that poetic exercise of itself which consists in the formation of visions or phantasies; and it did, in fact, so pass on those occasions more particularly when it was moved by pathos or by the feeling of the mysterious and awful. What is most observable, therefore, in the pieces under notice is that they exhibit the operation of those two constitutional kinds of emotion upon De Quincey's *intellectual* activity, transmuting it from the common or discursive mode to that called poetic imagination. Inasmuch as it is the implicated feeling or sentiment that moves the intellectual process, and inasmuch as there are marks of this in the rhythmical or lyrical character of the result, there is no great harm in calling that result impassioned prose, especially if we keep to the limitation stipulated by De Quincey's own phrase, "*a mode of* impassioned prose"; but it is better, all in all, to define the writings under consideration as examples of a peculiar "mode of imaginative prose," and, if further definition is wanted of this peculiar mode of prose poetry, to call it *Prose Phantasy and Lyric*, or *Lyrical Prose Phantasy*. De Quincey was consciously and deliberately an artist in this form of prose-poetry, and has left specimens of it that have very few parallels in English. One ought to remember, however, how much he must have been influenced by the previous example of Jean Paul Richter. Of his admiration of the famous German before he had himself begun his career of literature there is proof in his article on Richter published in the *London Magazine* in December 1821, just after the appearance of his *Confessions* in their first form in the same Magazine; and one observes that among the translated "analects" from Richter which

accompanied or followed that article, and were intended to introduce Richter to the English public, were *The Happy Life of a Parish Priest in Sweden* and the *Dream upon the Universe*, both of them specimens of Richter's peculiar art of prose-phantasy. There can be no doubt that Richter's example in such pieces influenced De Quincey permanently. But, though he may have learnt something from Richter, he was an original master in the same art.

One might go back here on his *Joan of Arc*, and some of the other writings of which account has been already taken, and claim for them, or for parts of them, fresh recognition in our present connexion. But let us confine ourselves to the writings to which De Quincey seems to have pointed more especially, and which have been already enumerated.

To the famous passages of "dream-phantasy" in the *Opium Confessions* we need not re-advert farther than to say that, extraordinary as they are as a whole, one may fairly object to parts of them, as to some of the similar dream-phantasies in Richter, that they fail by too much obtrusion of artistic self-consciousness in their construction, and sometimes also by a swooning of the power of clear and consecutive vision in a mere piling and excess of imagery and sound. The stroke on the mind at the time is not always equal to the look of the apparatus for inflicting it; and the memory does not retain a sufficient scar. No such objection can be urged against *The Daughter of Lebanon*, a fine visionary lyric of seven pages, figuring an early and miraculous conversion to Christianity in the person of an ideal girl of Damascus. Nor would any of De Quincey's readers give up the first two sections of *The English Mail Coach*, subtitled "The Glory of

Motion" and "The Vision of Sudden Death." There is nothing in Jean Paul quite like these.

In the first we are back in the old days between Trafalgar and Waterloo. Drawn up at the General Post Office in Lombard Street, and waiting for the hour to start, we see His Majesty's mails,—carriages, harness, horses, lamps, the dresses of driver and guard, all in the perfection of English equipment, and, if there has been news that day of a great victory, then the laurels, the oak leaves, the flowers, the ribbons, in addition. Seating ourselves beside the driver on one of the mails, we begin our journey of three hundred miles along one of the great roads, north or west, leaving Lombard Street at a quarter past eight in the evening. How, once out into the country, we shoot along, horses at gallop, the breeze in our faces, hedges and trees and fields and homesteads rushing past us in the darkness which we and our lamps are cleaving like a fiery arrow! How, at every stopping-station, there are the lights and bustle at the inn-door, and the laurels and other bedizenments we carry are seen ere we have well stopped, and we shout "Badajoz" or "Salamanca" in explanation, or whatever else may have been the last victory, and the hostlers and other inn-folk take up the huzza, and it is one round of congratulation and hand-shaking while we stay! But, punctually to the minute, having changed horses, and left the news palpitating in that neighbourhood, we are on again, horses at gallop, coach-lamps burning, and we beside the driver on the front seat, conscious that we are carrying the same news with us to neighbourhoods still ahead! On, on, stage after stage, in the same fashion, still cleaving the darkness, the horse-hoofs always audible and the coach-lamps always burning, till the darkness yields to a silver

glimmer and the glimmer to the glare of day!—Such is the series of sensations De Quincey has contrived to give us in his prose-poem called "The Glory of Motion." In the sequel, entitled "The Vision of Sudden Death," we are still on the same night journey by coach, or rather on one later night journey on the northern road between sixty and seventy years ago, with the difference that the glory of motion is now turned into horror. Pragmatically described, the paper is a recollection of a fatal accident by collision of the mail, in a very dark part of the road, with a solitary vehicle containing two persons, one of them a woman; but it is for the paper itself to show what the incident becomes in De Quincey's hands.—It passes into a third paper, still under the same general title of *The English Mail Coach*; which third paper, indeed, bears the extraordinary subtitle of "Dream-Fugue, founded on the preceding theme of Sudden Death." I cannot say that this "dream-fugue," which is offered as a lyrical finale to the little series, in visionary coherence with the preceding pieces, accomplishes its purpose very successfully. It is liable to the objection which may be urged, as we have said, against other specimens of De Quincey in the peculiar art of dream-phantasy. The artifice is too apparent, and the meaning is all but lost in a mere vague of music.

Of the three scraps of the *Suspiria* that are entitled to rank among the lyrical prose-phantasies, viz., *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*, *Savannah-la-Mar*, and *Memorial Suspiria*, only the first is of much importance. But that scrap, written in De Quincey's later life, is of as high importance as anything he ever wrote. It is perhaps the highest and finest thing, and also the most constitutionally significant, in all De Quincey. Fortunately, the essential core of it can be quoted entire. All that it is necessary

to premise is that "Levana" was the Roman Goddess of Education, the divinity who was supposed to "lift up" every newly-born human being from the earth in token that it should live, and to rule the influences to which it should be subject thenceforth till its character should be fully formed:—

THE THREE LADIES OF SORROW.

I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? O, no! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves there is no voice nor sound; eternal silence reigns in *their* kingdoms. They spoke not, as they talked with Levana; they whispered not; they sang not; though oftentimes methought they *might* have sung: for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted in darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. *They* wheeled in mazes; *I* spelled the steps. *They* telegraphed from afar; *I* read the signals. *They* conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness *my* eye traced the plots. *Theirs* were the symbols; *mine* are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form and their presence: if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline, or presence it were that for ever advanced to the front or for ever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation,—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethle-

hem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven. Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the eldest, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sat all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring time of the year, and whilst her own spring was budding, he recalled her to himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over *her*; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he awakens to a darkness that is now within a second and a deeper darkness. This *Mater Lachrymarum* also has been sitting all this winter of 1844-5 within the bedchamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter, not less pious, that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of the keys it is that Our Lady of Tears glides, a ghostly intruder, into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of Madonna.

The second sister is called *Mater Suspiriorum*, Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for

ever, for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, Madonna, is oftentimes stormy and frantic, raging in the highest against heaven, and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight. Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor of the Pariah, of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in the Mediterranean galleys; of the English criminal in Norfolk Island, blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England; of the baffled penitent reverting his eyes for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother, but for *him* a stepmother,—as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against *him* sealed and sequestered; every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients; every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-time by wicked kinsmen, whom God will judge; all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of hereditary disgrace:—all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key, but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem, and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest walks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third sister, who is also the youngest—! Hush! whisper whilst we talk of *her*! Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes, rising so high, *might* be hidden by distance. But, being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers, for noon of day or noon of night, for ebbing or for flowing tide, may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She is also the mother of lunacies and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power, but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions, in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And *her* name is *Mater Tenebrarum*, Our Lady of Darkness.

This is prose-poetry; but it is more. It is a permanent addition to the mythology of the human race. As the Graces are three, as the Fates are three, as the Furies are three, as the Muses were originally three, so may the varieties and degrees of misery that there are in the world, and the proportions of their distribution among mankind, be represented to the human imagination for ever by De Quincey's Three Ladies of Sorrow and his sketch of their figures and kingdoms.

THE END.

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

SHERIDAN

SHERIDAN

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

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AND NEW YORK
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NOTE.

THE most important and, on the whole, trustworthy life of Sheridan is that of Moore, published in 1825, nine years after Sheridan's death, and founded upon the fullest information, with the help of all that Sheridan had left behind in the way of papers, and all that the family could furnish—along with Moore's own personal recollections. It is not a very characteristic piece of work, and greatly dissatisfied the friends and lovers of Sheridan; but its authorities are unimpeachable. A previous Memoir by Dr. Watkins, the work of a political opponent and detractor, was without either this kind of authorisation or any grace of personal knowledge, and has fallen into oblivion. Very different is the brief sketch by the well-known Professor Smyth, a most valuable and interesting contribution to the history of Sheridan. It concerns, indeed, only the later part of his life, but it is the most lifelike and, under many aspects, the most touching contemporary portrait that has been made of him. With the professed intention of making up for the absence of character in Moore's *Life*, a small volume of SHERIDANIANA was published the year after, which is full of amusing anecdotes, but little, if any, additional information. Other essays on the subject have been many.

Scarcely an edition of Sheridan's plays has been published (and they are numberless) without a biographical notice, good or bad. The most noted of these is perhaps the *Biographical and Critical Sketch* of Leigh Hunt, which does not, however, pretend to any new light, and is entirely unsympathetic. Much more recently a book of personal *Recollections by an Octogenarian* promised to afford new information; but, except for the froth of certain dubious and not very savoury stories of the Prince Regent period, failed to do so.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

His Youth 1

CHAPTER II.

His First Dramatic Works 45

CHAPTER III.

The "School for Scandal" 77

CHAPTER IV.

Public Life 118

CHAPTER V.

Middle Age 152

CHAPTER VI.

Decadence 177

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

CHAPTER I.

HIS YOUTH.

RICHARD BRINSLEY BUTLER SHERIDAN was born in Dublin, in the month of September 1751, of a family which had already acquired some little distinction of a kind quite harmonious with the after fame of him who made its name so familiar to the world. The Sheridans were of that Anglo-Irish type which has given so much instruction and amusement to the world, and which has indeed in its wit and eccentricity so associated itself with the fame of its adopted country, that we might almost say it is from this peculiar variety of the race that we have all taken our idea of the national character. It will be a strange thing to discover, after so many years' identification of the idiosyncrasy as Irish, that in reality it is a hybrid, and not native to the soil. The race of brilliant, witty, improvident, and reckless Irishmen whom we have all been taught to admire, excuse, love, and condemn—the Goldsmiths, the Sheridans, and many more that will occur to the reader—all belong to this mingled blood. Many are more Irish, according to our present

compatriots of a
of English energy
front, to the surface,
misfortune and the most
of living never seem able to
names, and not among the O'Con-
do we find all that is most characteristic,
Irish manners and modes of thought.
more distinct from the Anglo-Saxon type could
it is separated from England in most cases
an occasional mixture of Celtic blood—often by
the simple fact of establishment for a few generations on
another soil. How it is that the bog and the mountain,
the softer climate, the salt breath of the Atlantic, should
have wrought this change, is a mystery of Ethnology
which we are quite incompetent to solve; or whether it
is mere external contact with an influence which the
native gives forth without being himself strongly affected
by it, we cannot tell. But the fact remains that the most
characteristic Irishmen—those through whom we recog-
nise the race—are as a matter of fact, so far as race is
concerned, not Irishmen at all. The same fact tells in
America, where a new type of character seems to have
been ingrafted upon the old by the changed conditions of
so vast a continent and circumstances so peculiar. Even
this, however, is not so remarkable in an altogether new
society, as the absorption, by what was in reality an alien
and a conquering race, of all that is most remarkable in
the national character which they dominated and subdued
—unless indeed we take refuge in the supposition, which
does not seem untenable, that this character, which we
have been so hasty in identifying with it, is not really

Irish at all; and that we have not yet fathomed the natural spirit, overlaid by such a *couche* of superficial foreign brilliancy, of that more mystic race, full of tragic elements, of visionary faith and purity, of wild revenge and subtle cunning, which is in reality native to the old island of the saints. Certainly the race of Columba seems to have little in common with the race of Sheridan.

The two immediate predecessors of the great dramatist are both highly characteristic figures, and thoroughly authentic, which is as much perhaps as any man of letters need care for. The first of these, Dr. Thomas Sheridan, Brinsley Sheridan's grandfather, was a clergyman and schoolmaster in Dublin in the early part of the eighteenth century—by all reports an excellent scholar and able instructor, but extravagant and hot-headed after his kind. He was the intimate friend aud associate of Swift in his later years, and lent a little brightness to the great Dean's society when he returned disappointed to his Irish preferment. Lord Orrery describes this genial but reckless parson in terms which are entirely harmonious with the after development of the family character:—

"He had that kind of good nature which absence of mind, indolence of body, and carelessness of fortune produce; and although not over-strict in his own conduct, yet he took care of the morality of his scholars, whom he sent to the university remarkably well-grounded in all kinds of learning, and not ill-instructed in the social duties of life. He was slovenly, indigent, and cheerful. He knew books better than men, and he knew the value of money least of all."

The chief point in Dr. Sheridan's career is of a tragi-comic character which still further increases the appro-

priateness of his appearance at the head of his descendants. By Swift's influence he was appointed to a living in Cork, in addition to which he was made one of the Lord-Lieutenant's chaplains, and thus put in the way of promotion generally. But on one unlucky Sunday the following incident occurred. It must be remembered that these were the early days of the Hanoverian succession, and that Ireland had been the scene of the last struggle for the Stuarts. He was preaching in Cork, in the principal church of the town on the 1st of August, which was kept as the King's birthday.

"Dr. Sheridan, after a very solemn preparation, and when he had drawn to himself the mute attention of his congregation, slowly and emphatically delivered his text, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* The congregation being divided in political opinions, gave to the text a decided political construction, and on the reverend preacher again reading the text with more marked emphasis became excited, and listened to the sermon with considerable restlessness and anxiety."

Another account describes this sermon as having been preached before the Lord-Lieutenant himself, an honour for which the preacher was not prepared, and which confused him so much that he snatched up the first sermon that came to hand, innocent of all political intention, as well as of the date which gave such piquancy to his text. But whatever the cause, the effect was disastrous. He "shot his fortune dead by chance-medley" with this single text. He lost his chaplaincy, and is even said to have been forbidden the viceregal court, and all the ways of promotion were closed to him for ever. But his spirit was not broken by his evil luck. "Still he remained a punster, a quibbler, a fiddler, and a wit. Not a day

passed without a rebus, an anagram, or a madrigal. His pen and his fiddle were constantly in motion." He had "such a ready wit and flow of humour that it was impossible for any, even the most splenetic man not to be cheerful in his company." "In the invitations sent to the Dean, Sheridan was always included; nor was Swift to be seen in perfect good humour unless when he made part of the company." Nothing could be more congenial to the name of Sheridan than the description of this lighthearted and easy-minded clerical humorist, whose wit no doubt flashed like lightning about all the follies of the mimic court which had cast him out, and whose jovial hand-to-mouth existence had all that accidentalness and mixture of extravagance and penury which is the natural atmosphere of such reckless souls. It is even said that Swift made use of his abilities and appropriated his wit: the reader must judge for himself whether the Dean had any need of thieving in that particular.

Dr. Sheridan's son, Thomas Sheridan, was a very different man. He was very young when he was left to make his way in the world for himself; he had been designed, it would appear, to be a schoolmaster like his father; but the stage has always had an attraction for those whose associations are connected with that more serious stage, the pulpit, and Thomas Sheridan became an actor. He is the author of a life of Swift, said to be "pompous and dull,"—qualities which seem to have mingled oddly in his own character with the lighthearted recklessness of his race. His success on the stage was not so great as was his popularity as a teacher of elocution, an art for which he seems to have conceived an

almost fanatical enthusiasm. Considering oratory, not without reason, as the master of all arts, he spent a great part of his life in eager efforts to form a school for its study, after a method of his own. This was not a successful project, nor, according to the little gleam of light thrown upon his system by Dr. Parr, does it seem to have been a very elevated one. "One of Richard's sisters now and then visited Harrow," he says, "and well do I remember that in the house where I lodged she triumphantly repeated Dryden's ode upon St. Cecilia's Day, according to the instruction given her by her father. Take a sample :—

> '*None* but the brave,
> None but the *brave*,
> None *but* the brave deserve the fair.'"

Thomas Sheridan, however, was not without appreciation as an actor, and, like every ambitious player of the time, had his hopes of rivalling Garrick, and was fondly considered by his friends to be worthy comparison with that king of actors. He married a lady who held no inconsiderable place in the light literature of the time, which was little, as yet, invaded by feminine adventure—the author of a novel called *Sidney Biddulph* and of various plays. And there is a certain reflection of the same kind of friendship which existed between Swift and the elder Sheridan in Boswell's description, in his *Life of Johnson*, of the loss his great friend had sustained through a quarrel with Thomas Sheridan "of one of his most agreeable resources for amusement in his lonely evenings." It would appear that at this time (1763) Sheridan and his wife were settled in London.

"Sheridan's well-informed, animated, and bustling mind never suffered conversation to stagnate," Boswell adds, "and Mrs. Sheridan was a most agreeable companion to an intellectual man. She was sensible, ingenious, unassuming, yet communicative. I recollect with satisfaction many pleasing hours which I passed with her under the hospitable roof of her husband, who was to me a very kind friend. Her novel entitled *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph* contains an excellent moral, while it inculcates a future state of retribution; and what it teaches is impressed upon the mind by a series of as deep distresses as can afflict humanity in the amiable and pious heroine. . . . Johnson paid her this high compliment upon it: 'I know not, madam, that you have a right upon high principles to make your readers suffer so much.'"

The cause of Johnson's quarrel with Sheridan is said to have been some slighting words reported to the latter, which Johnson had let fall when he heard that Sheridan had received a pension of £200 a year from Government. "What! have they given *him* a pension? then it is time for me to give up mine"—a not unnatural cause of offence, and all the more so that Sheridan flattered himself he had, by his interest with certain members of the ministry, who had been his pupils, helped to procure his pension for Johnson himself.

These were the palmy days of the Sheridan family. Their children, of whom Richard was the third, had been born in Dublin, where the two little boys, Richard and his elder brother Charles, began their education under the charge of a schoolmaster named Whyte, to whom they were committed with a despairing letter from their mother, who evidently had found the task of their education too much for her. Perhaps Mrs. Sheridan, in an age of epigrams, was not above the pleasure, so seductive to all who possess the gift, of writing a clever letter. She

tells the schoolmaster that the little pupils she is sending him will be his tutors in the excellent quality of patience. "I have hitherto been their only instructor," she says, "and they have sufficiently exercised mine, for two such impenetrable dunces I never met with." This is the first certificate with which the future wit and dramatist appeared before the world. When the parents went to London in 1762, the boys naturally accompanied them. And this being a time of prosperity, when Thomas Sheridan had Cabinet Ministers for his pupils, and interest enough to help the great man of letters of the age to a pension, it is not to be wondered if that hope which never springs eternal in any human breast so warmly as in that of a man who lives by his wits, and never knows what the morrow may bring forth, should have so encouraged the vivacious Irishman as to induce him to send his boys to Harrow, proud to give them the best of education, and opportunity of making friends for themselves. His pension, his pupils, his acting, his wife's literary gains, all conjoined to give a promise of prosperity. When his friends discussed him behind his back, it is true they were not very favourable to him. "There is to be seen in Sheridan something to reprehend, and everything to laugh at," says Johnson, in his "big bow-wow style;" "but, sir, he is not a bad man. No, sir: were mankind to be divided into good and bad, he would stand considerably within the ranks of the good." The same authority said of him that though he could "exhibit no character," yet he excelled in "plain declamation"; and he was evidently received in very good society, and was hospitable and entertained his friends, as it was his nature to do. Evidently, too, he had no

small opinion of himself. It is from Johnson's own mouth that the following anecdote at once of his liberality and presumption is derived. It does not show his critic, perhaps, in a more favourable light.

"Sheridan is a wonderful admirer of the tragedy of *Douglas*, and presented its author with a gold medal. Some years ago, at a coffee-house in Oxford, I called to him—'Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Sheridan! how came you to give a gold medal to Home for writing that horrid play?' This you see was wanton and insolent: but I meant to be wanton and insolent. A medal has no value but as a stamp of merit, and was Sheridan to assume to himself the right of giving that stamp? If Sheridan was magnificent enough to bestow a gold medal as an honorary mark of dramatic merit, he should have requested one of the Universities to choose the person on whom it should be conferred. Sheridan had no right to give a stamp of merit; it was counterfeiting Apollo's coin."

The Irishman's vanity, prodigality, and hasty assumption of an importance to which he had no right could scarcely be better exemplified—nor, perhaps, the reader will say, the privileged arrogance of the great critic. It is more easy to condone the careless extravagance of the one than the deliberate insolence of the other. The comment, however, is just enough; and so, perhaps, was his description of the Irishman's attempt to improve the elocution of his contemporaries. "What influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country by his narrow exertions?" asks the great lexicographer. "Sir, it is burning a candle at Dover to show light at Calais." But when Johnson says, "Sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull: but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in nature,"—we acknow-

ledge the wit, but doubt the fact. Thomas Sheridan very likely wanted humour, and was unable to perceive when he made himself ridiculous, as in the case of the medal; but we want a great deal more evidence to induce us to believe that the son of the jovial Dublin priest, and the father of Sheridan the great, could have been dull. He was very busy—"bustling," as Boswell calls him, his schemes going to his head, his vanity and enthusiasm combined making him feel himself an unappreciated reformer—a prophet thrown away upon an ungrateful age. But stupidity had nothing to do with his follies. He was "a wrong-headed whimsical man," Dr. Parr tells us, but adds, "I respected him, and he really liked me and did me some important services." "I once or twice met his (Richard Sheridan's) mother: she was quite celestial." Such are the testimonies of their contemporaries.

It was not long, however, that the pair were able to remain in London. There is a whimsical indication of the state of distress into which Thomas Sheridan soon fell in the mention by Boswell of "the extraordinary attention in his own country" with which he had been "honoured," by having had "an exception made in his favour in an Irish Act of Parliament concerning insolvent debtors." "Thus to be singled out," says Johnson, "by Legislature as an object of public consideration and kindness is a proof of no common merit." It was a melancholy kind of proof, however, and one which few would choose to be gratified by. The family went to France, leaving their boys at Harrow, scraping together apparently as much as would pay their expenses there—no small burden upon a struggling man. And at Blois, in 1766, Mrs. Sheridan died. "She appears," says Moore,

"to have been one of those rare women who, united to men of more pretensions but less real intellect than themselves, meekly conceal this superiority even from their own hearts, and pass their lives without a remonstrance or murmur in gently endeavouring to repair those evils which the indiscretion or vanity of their partners have brought upon them." Except that she found him at seven an impenetrable dunce, there is no record of any tie of sympathy existing between Mrs. Sheridan and her brilliant boy.

He had not perhaps, indeed, ever appeared in this character during his mother's lifetime. At Harrow he made but an unsatisfactory appearance. "There was little in his boyhood worth communication," says Dr. Parr, whose long letter on the subject all Sheridan's biographers quote; "he was inferior to many of his schoolfellows in the ordinary business of a school, and I do not remember any one instance in which he distinguished himself by Latin or English composition either in prose or verse." This is curious enough; but it is not impossible that the wayward boy, if he did adventure himself in verse, would think it best to keep his youthful compositions sacred from a master's eye. Verse writers, both in the dead languages and in the living, flourished at Harrow in those days of whom no one has heard since, "but Richard Sheridan aspired to no rivalry with either of them." Notwithstanding this absence of all the outward show of talent, Parr was not a man to remain unconscious of the glimmer of genius in the Irish boy's bright eyes. When he found that Dick would not construe as he ought, he laid plans to take him with craft, and "did not fail to probe and tease him."

"I stated his case with great good humour to the upper master, who was one of the best tempered men in the world: and it was agreed between us that Richard should be called oftener and worked more severely. The varlet was not suffered to stand up in his place, but was summoned to take his station near the master's table, where the voice of no prompter could reach him: and in this defenceless condition he was so harassed that he at last gathered up some grammatical rules and prepared himself for his lessons. While this tormenting process was inflicted upon him, I now and then upbraided him. But you will take notice that he did not incur any corporal punishment for his idleness: his industry was just sufficient to keep him from disgrace. All the while Sumner and I saw in him vestiges of a superior intellect. His eye, his countenance, his general manner, were striking; his answers to any common question were prompt and acute. We knew the esteem and even admiration which somehow or other all his schoolfellows felt for him. He was mischievous enough, but his pranks were accompanied by a sort of vivacity and cheerfulness which delighted Sumner and myself. I had much talk with him about his apple loft, for the supply of which all the gardens in the neighbourhood were taxed, and some of the lower boys were employed to furnish it. I threatened, but without asperity, to trace the depredators through his associates up to the leader. He with perfect good humour set me at defiance, and I never could bring home the charge to him. All boys and all masters were pleased with him."

The amount of "good humour" in this sketch is enough to make the Harrow of last century look like a scholastic paradise; and the humorous torture to which young Sheridan was subjected shows a high sense of the appropriate either in "the best tempered man in the world," or in the learned doctor who loved to set forth his own doings and judgment in the best light, and had the advantage of telling his story after events had shown what the pupil was. Parr, however, modestly

disowns the credit of having developed the intellectual powers of Sheridan, and neither were they stimulated into literary effort by Sumner, the head-master of Harrow, who was a friend of his father, and had therefore additional opportunities of knowing the boy's capabilities. "We both of us discovered great talents which neither of us were capable of calling into action while Sheridan was a schoolboy," Parr says. In short, it is evident that the boy, always popular and pleasant, amusing and attracting his schoolfellows, and on perfectly amicable terms with the masters, even when he was doubtful about his lesson, took no trouble whatever with his work, and cared nothing for the honours of school. He kept himself afloat, and that was all. His sins were not grievous in any way. He had it not in his power to be extravagant, for Thomas Sheridan in his bankrupt condition must have had hard enough ado to keep his boys at Harrow at all. But it is very clear that neither scholarship nor laborious mental exertion of any kind tempted him. He took the world lightly and gaily, and enjoyed his schoolboy years all the more that there was nothing of the struggle of young ambition in them. When his family came back from France shortly after the mother's death, it is with a little gush of enthusiasm that his sister describes her first meeting after long separation with the delightful brother whom she had half forgotten, and who appears like a young hero in all the early bloom of seventeen, with his Irish charm and his Harrow breeding, to the eyes of the little girl, accustomed no doubt to shabby enough gentlemen in the cheap retreats of English poverty in France.

"He was handsome, not merely in the eyes of a partial sister, but generally allowed to be so. His cheeks had the glow of health, his eyes—the finest in the world—the brilliancy of genius, and were soft as a tender and affectionate heart could render them. The same playful fancy, the same sterling and innoxious wit that was shown afterwards in his writings, cheered and delighted the family circle. I admired —I almost adored him!"

No doubt the handsome merry boy was a delightful novelty in the struggling family, where even the girls were taught to mouth verses, and the elder brother had begun to accompany his father on his half-vagabond career as a lecturer, to give examples of the system of elocution upon which he had concentrated all his faculties. After a short stay in London the family went to Bath, where for a time they settled, the place in its high days of fashion being propitious to all the arts. The father, seldom at home, lived a hard enough life, lecturing, teaching, sometimes playing, pursuing his favourite object as hotly as was practicable through all the struggles necessary to get a living, such as it was, now abundant, now meagre, for his family; while the girls and boys lived a sort of hap-hazard existence in the gay city, getting what amusement they could—motherless, and left to their own resources, yet finding society of a sufficiently exciting kind among the visitors with whom the town overflowed, and the artist-folk who entertained them. Here, while Charles worked with his father, Richard would seem to have done nothing at all, but doubtless strolled about the fashionable promenade among the bucks and beaux, and heard all that was going on, and saw the scandal-makers nod their heads together, and the officers now and then arrange a duel, and Lydia

Languish ransack the circulating libraries. They were all about in those lively streets, Mrs. Malaprop deranging her epitaphs, and Sir Lucius with his pistols always ready, and the little waiting-maid tripping about the scene with Delia's letters and *Broken Vows* under her arm. The young gentleman swaggering among them saw everything without knowing it, and remembered those familiar figures when the time came: but in the meanwhile did nothing, living pleasantly with his young sisters, no doubt very kind to them, and spending all the money the girls could spare out of their little housekeeping, and falling in love, the most natural amusement of all.

It is wrong, however, to say that he was entirely idle. At Harrow he had formed an intimate friendship with a youth more ambitious than himself, the Nathaniel Halhed whom Dr. Parr chronicles as having "written well in Latin and Greek." With this young man Sheridan entered into a sort of literary partnership both in classical translation and dramatic composition. Their first attempt was a farce called *Jupiter;* the subject being the story of Ixion, in which, curiously enough, the after-treatment of the *Critic* is shadowed forth in various points, the little drama being in the form of a rehearsal before a tribunal not unlike that to which Mr. Puff submits his immortal tragedy. Simile, the supposed author, indeed says one or two things which are scarcely unworthy of Puff. The following passage occurs in a scene in which he is explaining to his critics the new fashion of composition, how the music is made first, and "the sense" afterwards (a process no ways astonishing to the present generation), and how "a complete set of scenes from Italy" is the first framework of

the play which "some ingenious hand" writes up to. "By this method," says one of the wondering commentators, "you must often commit blunders?"

"*Simile.* Blunders! to be sure I must, but I always could get myself out of them again. Why, I'll tell you an instance of it. You must know I was once a journeyman sonnet-writer to Signor Squaltini. Now, his method, when seized with the *furor harmonicus*, was constantly to make me sit by his side, while he was thrumming on his harpsichord, in order to make extempore verses to whatever air he should beat out to his liking. I remember one morning as he was in this situation—*thrum, thrum, thrum* (moving his fingers as if beating on the harpsichord), striking out something prodigiously great as he thought—'Hah!' said he; 'hah! Mr. Simile—*thrum, thrum, thrum*—by gar, him is vary fine—write me some words directly.' I durst not interrupt him to ask on what subject, so instantly began to describe a fine morning.

Calm was the land and calm the skies,
And calm the heaven's dome serene,
Hush'd was the gale and hush'd the breeze,
And not a vapour to be seen.

I sang it to his notes. 'Hah! upon my word, vary pritt—*thrum, thrum, thrum.* Stay, stay! Now, upon my word, here it must be an adagio. *Thrum, thrum, thrum.* Oh! let it be an Ode to Melancholy.'

Monop. The devil! then you were puzzled sure——

Sim. Not in the least! I brought in a cloud in the next stanza, and matters, you see, came about at once.

Monop. An excellent transition.

O'Cd. Vastly ingenious, indeed.

Sim. Was it not, very? it required a little command—a little presence of mind."

When the rehearsal begins, the resemblance is still more perfect, though there is no reproduction either of the plot or characters introduced. We are not told how much share Halhed had in the composition: it was he

who furnished the skeleton of the play, but it is scarcely possible that such a scene as the above could be from any hand but Sheridan's. This youthful effort was never finished. It was to have brought in a sum of money, which they both wanted much, to the young authors: "The thoughts," Halhed says, "of £200 shared between us are enough to bring the water into one's eyes." Halhed, then at Oxford, wanted the money above all things to enable him to pay a visit to Bath, where lived the young lady whom all these young men adored; and young Sheridan, who can doubt, required it for a thousand uses. But they were both at an age when a great part of pleasure lies in the planning, and when the mind is easily diverted to another and another new beginning. A publication of the *Tatler* type was the next project, to be called (one does not know why) *Hernan's Miscellany;* but this never went further than a part composition of the first number, which is somewhat feeble and flippant, as the monologue of an essayist of that old-fashioned type, if not under any special inspiration, is apt to be. Finally the young men succeeded in producing a volume of so-called translations from a dubious Latin author called Aristænetus, of whom no one knows much, and on whom at least it was very easy for them to father the light and frothy verses, which no one was likely to seek for in the original—if an original existed. Their preface favours the idea that the whole business was a literary hoax by which they did not even expect their readers to be taken in. *Aristænetus* got itself published, the age being fond of classics rubbed down into modern verse, but does not seem to have done any more. The two young men were in hopes that Sumner. their old master, "and the wise few of their

acquaintance," would talk about the book, and perhaps discover the joint authorship, and help them to fame and profit. But these hopes were not realised, as indeed they did not in the least deserve to be. They were flattered by being told that Johnson was supposed to be the author, which must have been a friendly invention; and Halhed tried to believe that "everybody had read the book," and that the second part, vaguely promised in the preface on condition of the success of the first, "should be published immediately, being of opinion that the readers of the first volume would be sure to purchase the second, and that the publication of the second would put it into the heads of others to buy the first,"—a truly business-like argument, which, however, did not convince the booksellers. It seems a pity to burden the collection of Sheridan's works now with these unprofitable verses, which were never acknowledged, and did not even procure for young Halhed, who wanted it so much, the happiness of a visit to Bath, or a sight of the object of his boyish adoration.

It is the presence of this lady which gives interest and romance to the early chapter of Sheridan's life, and the record cannot go further without bringing her in. There flourished at Bath in those days a family called by Dr. Burney, in his *History of Music*, a nest of nightingales, —the family of Linley, the composer, who had been for years at the head of musical enterprise in the district, the favourite singing master, the conductor of all the concerts, a man whom Bath delighted to honour, and whose fame spread over England by means of the *beau monde* which took the waters in that city of pleasure. The position that such a man takes in a provincial town has become once more so much like what it was in the latter half of

last century, when Handel was at Windsor and England in one of its musical periods, that it will be easily realised by the reader. The brevet rank, revocable at the pleasure of society, which the musical family obtains, its admission among all the fine people, the price it has to pay for its elevation, and the vain hope that it is prized for its own personal qualities, which flatters it while in its prime of attraction,—the apparent equality, nay, almost superiority, of the triumphant musicians among their patrons, who yet never forget the real difference between them, and whose homage is often little more than a form of insult,—give a dramatic interest to the group such as few possess. This was the position held by the Linleys among the fine people of Bath. There were beautiful girls in the musician's house, which was always open, hospitable, and bright, and where a perpetual flutter of admiration and compliments, half affectionate, half humorous, the enthusiasm of a coterie, was in the ears of the young creatures in all their early essays in art. Men of wealth and sometimes of rank, the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, the officers and the wits,—all friends of Linley, and glad to invite him to club and coffee-house and mess-room,—were always about to furnish escorts and a flattering train wherever the young singers went. The eldest daughter, Elizabeth—or Eliza, as it was the fashion of the time to shorten and vulgarise that beautiful name—was a lovely girl of sixteen when the young Sheridans became known about Bath. Her voice was as lovely as her face, and she was the prima donna of her father's concerts, going with him to sing at festivals in other cathedral towns, and often to Oxford, where she had turned the head of young Halhed and of many an undergraduate

beside. In Bath the young men were all at her feet, and not only the young men, as was natural, but the elder and less innocent members of society. That the musician and his wife might have entertained hopes or even allowed themselves to be betrayed into not entirely unjustifiable schemings to marry their beautiful child to somebody who would raise her into a higher sphere, may well be believed. One such plan indeed it is evident did exist, which the poor girl herself foiled by making an artless confession to the man whom her parents had determined she should marry—"Mr. Long, an old gentleman of considerable fortune," who had the magnanimity to take upon himself the burden of breaking the engagement, and closed the indignant father's mouth by settling a little fortune of £3000 upon the young lady.

A danger escaped in this way, however, points to many other pitfalls among which her young feet had to tread, and one at least of a far more alarming kind has secured for itself a lasting place in her future husband's history. There is a curious letter[1] extant, which is printed in all Sheridan's biographies, and in which Eliza gives an account to a dear friend and confidant of the toils woven around her by one of her father's visitors, a certain Captain Matthews, who, though a married man and much older than herself, had beguiled the simple girl into a prolonged and clandestine sentimental correspondence. The sophisticated reader, glancing at this quaint production, without thought of the circumstances or the

[1] Mrs. Norton in a preliminary sketch to an intended history of the Sheridans, never written, denies the authenticity of this letter with a somewhat ill-directed family pride: but no doubt has been thrown upon it by any of Sheridan's biographers.

person, would probably conclude that there was harm in it, which it is very certain from all that is said and done besides did not exist; but the girl in her innocence evidently felt that the stolen intercourse, the whisperings aside, the man's protestations of fondness, and despair if she withdrew from him, and her own half-flattered half-frightened attraction towards him, were positive guilt. The letter, indeed, is Lydia Languish from beginning to end,—the Lydia Languish of real life without any genius to trim her utterance into just as much as is needful and characteristic,—and in consequence is somewhat tedious, long-winded, and confused; but her style, something between Clarissa Harlowe and Julia Mannering, is quite appropriate at once to the revelation and the period. The affair to which her letter refers has occupied far too much space, we think, in the story of Sheridan's life, yet it is a curious exposition of the time, the class, and the locality. The Maid of Bath, as she was called, had many adorers. Young Halhed, young Charles Sheridan —neither of them with much to offer—followed her steps wherever she moved, and applauded to the echo every note she sang, as did many another adorer; while within the busy and full house the middle-aged visitor, her father's so-called friend, had a hundred opportunities for a whispered word, a stolen caress, half permissible for the sake of old friendship, and because no doubt he had known her from a child. But even at sixteen the eyes of a girl accustomed to so many tributes would soon be opened, and the poor Lydia became alarmed by the warmth of her half-paternal lover and by the secrecy of his communications. This was her position at the time the Sheridans appear upon the scene.

The new influence immediately began to tell. Miss Linley and Miss Sheridan became devoted friends—and the two brothers "on our first acquaintance both professed to love me." She gave them no hope "that I should ever look upon them in any other light than as brothers of my friend;" but yet "preferred the youngest" as "by far the most agreeable in person, beloved by every one, and greatly respected by all the better sort of people." Richard Sheridan, it would seem, immediately assumed the position of the young lady's secret guardian. He made friends with Matthews, became even intimate with him, and thus discovered the villainous designs which he entertained; while, on the other hand, he obtained the confidence of the lady, and became her chief adviser. It was a curious position for a young man—but he was very young, very poor, without any prospects that could justify him in entering the lists on his own account; and while he probably succeeded in convincing Miss Linley that his love for her was subdued into friendship, he seems to have been able to keep his secret from all his competitors, and not to have been suspected by any of them. In the heat of the persecution by Matthews, who resisted all her attempts to shake off his society, frightening her by such old-fashioned expedients as threatening his own life, and declaring that he could not live without seeing her—incessant consultations were necessary with the young champion who knew the secret, and whose advice and countenance were continually appealed to. No doubt they met daily in the ordinary course at each other's houses; but romance made it desirable that they should find a secret spot where Eliza could confide her troubles to Richard, and he warn her and encourage her in her

resistance. "A grotto in Sydney Gardens" is reported to have been the scene of these meetings. On one occasion the anxious adviser must have urged his warnings too far, or insisted too warmly upon the danger of her position, for she left him angrily, resenting his interference: and this was the occasion of the verses addressed to Delia which he left upon the seat of the grotto for her, with an apparently well-justified but somewhat rash confidence that they would fall into no other hands. In this, after celebrating the "moss-covered grotto of stone" and the dew-dripping willow that overshadows it, he unfolds the situation as follows:—

"—this is the grotto where Delia reclined,
As late I in secret her confidence sought;
And this is the tree kept her safe from the wind,
As blushing she heard the grave lesson I taught.

"Then tell me thou grotto of moss-covered stone,
And tell me thou willow with leaves dripping dew,
Did Delia seem vexed when Horatio was gone,
And did she confess her resentment to you?

"Methinks now each bough as you're waving it tries
To whisper a cause for the sorrow I feel,
To hint how she frowned when I dared to advise,
And sigh'd when she saw that I did it with zeal.

"True, true, silly leaves, so she did I allow;
She frowned, but no rage in her looks did I see;
She frowned, but reflection had clouded her brow,
She sigh'd, but perhaps 'twas in pity for me.

. . . . . .

"For well did she know that my heart meant no wrong,
It sank at the thought but of giving her pain;
But trusted its task to a faltering tongue,
Which err'd from the feelings it would not explain.

"Yet oh, if indeed I've offended the maid,
If Delia my humble monition refuse,—
Sweet willow, the next time she visits thy shade,
Fan gently her bosom and plead its excuse.

"And thou, stony grot, in thy arch may'st preserve
Two lingering drops of the night-fallen dew;
And just let them fall at her feet, and they'll serve
As tears of my sorrow entrusted to you."

This is not very fine poetry; but it is very instructive as to the curious complication of affairs. It would not have suited Captain Absolute to play such a part; but Lydia Languish, amid all the real seriousness of the dilemma, no doubt would have derived a certain comfort from the romantic circumstances altogether—the villain, on one hand, threatening to lay his death at her door; the modest self-suppressed adorer, on the other, devoting himself to her service; the long confidential conferences in the dark and damp little shelter behind the willow; the verses left on the seat;—nothing could have been more delightful to a romantic imagination.

But the excitement heightened as time went on; and the poor girl was so harassed and persecuted by the man whose suit was a scandal, that she tried at last, she tells us, to take poison as the only way of escape for her, searching for and finding in Miss Sheridan's room a small phial of laudanum, which had been used for an aching tooth, and which was too small apparently to do any harm. After this tremendous evidence of her miserable state, Sheridan, who would seem to have confined himself hitherto to warnings and hints, now disclosed the full turpitude of Matthews' intentions, and showed her a letter in which the villain announced that he had determined to proceed

to strong measures, and if he could not overcome her by pleadings meant to carry her off by force. "The moment I read this horrid letter I fainted, and it was some time before I could recover my senses sufficiently to thank Mr. Sheridan for opening my eyes." But the question now was, What was to be done? For the poor girl seems to have had no confidence in her father's power of protecting her, and probably knew the inexpediency of embroiling him with his patrons. The two young creatures laid their foolish heads together in this crisis of fate—the girl thoroughly frightened, the youth full of chivalrous determination to protect her, and doubtless not without a hotheaded young lover's hope to turn it to his own advantage. He proposed that she should fly to France, and there take refuge in a convent till the danger should be over. His own family had left France only a few years before, and the sister who was Eliza's friend would recommend her to the kind nuns at St. Quentin, where she had herself been brought up. "He would go with me to protect me, and after he had seen me settled he would return to England and place my conduct in such a light that the world would applaud and not condemn me."

Such was the wonderful expedient by which the difficulties of this terrible crisis were surmounted. Her mother was ill and the house in great disorder, and under cover of the accidental commotion young Sheridan handed the agitated girl into a chair,—his sister, who was in the secret, and, no doubt, in high excitement too, coming secretly to help her to pack up her clothes; and that night they posted off to London. "Sheridan had engaged the wife of one of his servants to go with me as

a maid without my knowledge. You may imagine how pleased I was with his delicate behaviour." This last particular reaches the very heights of chivalry, for, no doubt, it must have been quite a different matter to the impassioned boy to conduct the flight, with a commonplace matron seated in his post-chaise between him and his beautiful Delia, instead of the *tête-à-tête* which he might so easily have secured. Next day they crossed the Channel to the little sandy port of Dunkirk and were safe.

And it would seem that the rash young lover was very honest and really meant to carry out this mad project; for she did eventually reach her convent, whither he attended her with punctilious respect. But when they were fairly launched upon their adventurous career, either common sense or discreet acquaintances soon made it apparent to the young man that a youth and a maiden, however virtuous, cannot rove about the world in this way without comment, and that there was but one thing to be done in the circumstances. Perhaps Miss Linley had begun to feel something more than the mere "preference for the youngest," which she had so calmly announced, or perhaps it was only the desperate nature of the circumstances that made her yield. But however that may be, the two fugitives went through the ceremony of marriage at Calais, though they seem to have separated immediately afterwards, carrying out the high sentimental and Platonic romance to the end.

It is a curious commentary, however, upon the prodigality of the penniless class to which Sheridan belonged, that he could manage to start off suddenly upon this journey out of Thomas Sheridan's shifty household, where money was never abundant, a boy of twenty with nothing

of his own—hurrying up to London with post-horses, and hiring magnificently "the wife of one of his servants" to attend upon his love. The words suggest a retinue of retainers, and the journey itself would have taxed the resources of a youth much better endowed than Sheridan. Did he borrow, or run chivalrously into debt? or how did he manage it? His sister "assisted them with money out of her little fund for house expenses," but that would not go far. Perhaps the friend in London (a "respectable brandy-merchant") to whom he introduced Miss Linley as an heiress who had eloped with him, may have helped on such a warrant to furnish the funds. But there is nothing more remarkable than the ease with which these impecunious gallants procure post-chaises, servants, and luxuries in those dashing days. The young men think nothing of a headlong journey from Bath to London and back again, which, notwithstanding all our increased facilities of locomotion, penniless youths of to-day would hesitate about. To be sure it is possible that credit was to be had at the livery-stables, whereas, fortunately, none is possible at the railway station. Post-horses seem to have been an affair of every day to the heroes of the Crescent and the Parade.

Meanwhile everything was left in commotion at home. Charles Sheridan, the elder brother, had left Bath and gone to the country in such dejection, after Miss Linley's final refusal of his addresses, as became a sentimental lover. When Richard went off triumphant with the lady, his sisters were left alone in great excitement and agitation, and their landlord, thinking the girls required "protection," according to the language of the time, set out at break of day to bring back the rejected from his

retirement. The feelings of Charles on finding that his younger brother, whom even the girls did not know to be a lover of Miss Linley, had carried off the prize, may be imagined. But the occasion of the elopement, the designing villain of the piece,—the profligate whose pursuit had driven the lady to despair,—was furious. Miss Linley had no doubt left some explanation of the extraordinary step she was taking with her parents, and Sheridan appears to have taken the same precaution and disclosed the reasons which prompted her flight. When Matthews heard of this he published the following advertisement in a Bath newspaper.

"Mr. Richard S * * * * * * * having attempted, in a letter left behind him for that purpose, to account for his scandalous method of running away from this place by insinuations derogatory to *my* character and that of a young lady innocent so far as relates to *me* or *my* knowledge; since which he has neither taken any notice of letters, or even informed his own family of the place where he has hid himself: I can no longer think he deserves the treatment of a gentleman, and therefore shall trouble myself no further about him than, in this public method, to post him as a L * * * and a treacherous S * * * * * * * * *

"And as I am convinced there have been many malevolent incendiaries concerned in the propagation of this infamous lie, if any of them, unprotected by age, infirmities, or profession, will dare to acknowledge the part they have acted, and affirm *to* what they have said *of* me, they may depend on receiving the proper reward of their villainy in the most public manner."

This fire-eating paragraph was signed with the writer's name, and it may be imagined what a delightful commotion it made in such a metropolis of scandal and leisure, and with what excitement all the frequenters of the

pump-room and the assemblies looked for the next incident. Some weeks elapsed before they were satisfied, but the following event was striking enough to content the most sensational imagination. It would seem to have been April before a clue was found to the fugitives, and Linley started at once from Bath to recover his daughter. He found her, to his great relief doubtless, in the house of an English doctor in Lisle, who had brought her there from her convent, and placed her under his wife's care to be nursed when she was ill. Everything, it was evident, had been done in honour, and the musician seems to have been so thankful to find things no worse that he took the young people's explanations in good part. He would even seem to have made some sort of conditional promise that she should no longer be compelled to perform in public after she had fulfilled existing engagements, and so brought her back peacefully to Bath. Richard, who in the meantime, in his letters home, had spoken of his bride as Miss L., announcing her settlement in her convent, without the slightest intimation of any claim on his part upon her, seems to have returned with them; but no one, not even Miss Linley's father, was informed of the Calais marriage, which seems, in all good faith, to have been a form gone through in case any scandal should be raised, but at present meaning nothing more. And Bath, with all its scandal-mongers, at a period when the general imagination was far from delicate, seems to have accepted the escapade with a confidence in both the young people, and entire belief in their honour, which makes us think better both of the age and the town. We doubt whether such faith would be shown in the hero and heroine of a similar freak in our own day.

Young Sheridan, however, came home to no peaceable reception. He had to meet his indignant brother in the first place, and to settle the question raised by the insulting advertisement of Matthews, which naturally set his youthful blood boiling. Before his return to Bath he had seen this villain in London, who had the audacity to disclaim the advertisement and attribute it to Charles Sheridan—a suggestion which naturally brought the young man home furious. The trembling sisters, delighted to welcome Richard, and, eager to know all about his adventure, had their natural sentiments checked by the gloomy looks with which the brothers met; and went to bed reluctantly that first evening, hearing the young men's voices high and angry, and anticipating with horror a quarrel between them. Next morning neither of them appeared. They had gone off again with those so-easily-obtained post-horses to London. A terrible time of waiting ensued; the distracted girls ran to the Linleys, but found no information there. They expected nothing better than to hear of a duel between their brothers for the too-charming Eliza's sake.

Hitherto, all has been the genteelest of comedy in fine eighteenth-century style: the villain intriguing, the ardent young lover stealing the lady out of his clutches, and Lydia Languish herself not without a certain delight in the romance, notwithstanding all her flutterings: the post-chaise dashing through the night, the alarms of the voyage, the curious innocent delusion of the marriage, complaisant priest and homely confidant, and guardian-bridegroom with a soul above every ungenerous advantage. But the following act is wildly sensational. The account of the brawl that follows is given at length by

all Sheridan's biographers. It is scarcely necessary to say that when the brothers, angry as both were, had mutually explained themselves, it was not to lift unnatural hands against each other that they sallied forth, while the girls lay listening and trembling upstairs, but to jump once more into a post-chaise, and rattle over the long levels of the Bath road to town through the dewy chill of a May night, which did nothing, however, towards cooling their hot blood. Before leaving Bath, Richard had flashed forth a letter to the Master of the Ceremonies, informing him that Matthews' conduct had been such that no verbal apology could now be accepted from him. The first step the hero took on arriving in London was to challenge the villain, who indeed would seem to have behaved as infamously as the most boldly-drawn villain on the stage could be represented as doing. And then comes a most curious scene. The gentlemen with their rapiers go out to the Park, walking out together about six in the evening, apparently a time when the Park was almost empty; but on various pretences the offender declines to fight there, with an air of endeavouring to slip out of the risk altogether. After several attempts to persuade him to stand and draw, the party, growing more and more excited, at length go to a coffee-house, "The Castle Tavern, Henrietta Street"—having first called at two or three other places, where their heated looks would seem to have roused suspicion. Their march through the streets in the summer evening on this strange errand, each with his second, the very sword quivering at young Richard's side and the blood boiling in his veins, among all the peaceful groups streaming away from the Park, is wonderful to think of. When they got admittance at last to a

private room in the tavern, the following scene occurs :—

"Mr. Ewart (the second of Sheridan) took lights up in his hand, and almost immediately on our entering the room we engaged. I struck Mr. Matthews' point so much out of the line that I stepped up and caught hold of his wrist, or the hilt of his sword, while the point of mine was at his breast. You (the letter is addressed to the second on the other side) ran in and caught hold of my arm, exclaiming—'Don't kill him!' I struggled to disengage my arm, and said his sword was in my power. Mr. Matthews called out twice or thrice, 'I beg my life.' You immediately said 'There! he has begged his life, and now there is an end of it;' and on Mr. Ewart's saying that when his sword was in my power, as I attempted no more you should not have interfered, you replied that you were wrong, but that you had done it hastily and to prevent mischief—or words to that effect. Mr. Matthews then hinted that I was rather obliged to your interposition for the advantage: you declared that before you did so both the swords were in Mr. Sheridan's power. Mr. Matthews still seemed resolved to give it another turn, and observed that he had never quitted his sword. Provoked at this I then swore (with too much heat, perhaps) that he should either give up his sword and I would break it, or go to his guard again. He refused—but on my persisting either gave it into my hand, or flung it on the table or the ground (which, I will not absolutely affirm). I broke it and flung the hilt to the other end of the room. He exclaimed at this. I took a mourning sword from Mr. Ewart, and, presenting him with mine, gave my honour that what had passed should never be mentioned by me, and he might now right himself again. He replied that he 'would never draw a sword against the man that had given him his life'; but on his still exclaiming against the indignity of breaking his sword (which he had brought upon himself), Mr. Ewart offered him the pistols, and some altercation passed between them. Mr. Matthews said that he could never show his face if it were known that his sword was broke—that such a thing had never been done—that it cancelled all obligations, etc. You seemed

to think it was wrong, and we both proposed that if he never misrepresented the affair it should not be mentioned by us. This was settled. I then asked Mr. Matthews, as he had expressed himself sensible of and shocked at the injustice and indignity he had done me by his advertisement, whether it did not occur to him that he owed me another satisfaction: and that as it was now in his power to do it without discredit, I supposed he would not hesitate. This he absolutely refused, unless conditionally. I insisted on it, and said I would not leave the room till it was settled. After much altercation, and with much ill grace, he gave the apology."

There could not be a more curious scene. The out-door duel is familiar enough both to fact and fiction; but the flash of the crossing swords, the sudden rush, the altercations of the angry group, the sullen submission of the disarmed bully, going on by the light of the flaring candles, in an inn-parlour, while the ordinary bustle of the tavern proceeded peacefully below, is as strange a picture as we can remember. Sheridan's account of the circumstances was made in answer to another, which stated them, as he asserts, falsely. The brothers returned home on Tuesday morning (they had left Bath on Saturday night), "much fatigued, not having been in bed since they left home," with Matthews' apology, and triumph in their hearts, to the great consolation and relief of the anxious girls. But their triumph was not to be so easy. The circumstances of the duel oozed out, as most things do, and Matthews, stung by shame, challenged Sheridan again, choosing pistols as the weapons, *prior to swords*, "from a conviction that Mr. Sheridan would run in on him and an ungentlemanly scuffle probably be the consequence." This presentiment very evidently was justified; for the pistols were not used, and the duel ended in a violent scuffle—not like

the usual dignified calm which characterises such deadly meetings. Matthews broke his sword upon Sheridan's ribs. The two antagonists fell together, Sheridan wounded and bleeding underneath, while the elder and heavier man punched at him with his broken sword. They were separated at length by the seconds, Sheridan refusing to "beg his life." He was carried home very seriously wounded, and, as was believed, in great danger. Miss Linley was singing at Oxford at the time, and while there Sheridan's wounded condition and the incident altogether was concealed from her, though everybody else knew of it and of her connection with it. When it was at last communicated to her, she almost betrayed their secret, which even now nobody suspected, by a cry of "My husband! my husband!" which startled all who were present, but was set down to her excitement and distress, and presently forgotten.

This tremendous encounter closed the episode. Matthews had vindicated his courage and obliterated the stigma of the broken sword, and though there was at one moment a chance of a third duel, thenceforward we hear little more of him. Sheridan recovered slowly under the care of his sisters, his father and brother being again absent and not very friendly. "We neither of us could approve of the cause in which you suffer," Charles writes. "All your friends here (in London) condemn you." The brother, however, has the grace to add that he is "unhappy at the situation I leave you in with respect to money matters," and that "Ewart was greatly vexed at the manner of your drawing for the last twenty pounds," so that it seems the respectable brandy-merchant had been the family stand-by. The poor young fellow's position was miser-

able enough—badly wounded, without a shilling, his love sedulously kept away from him, and the bond between them so strenuously ignored, that he promised his father, with somewhat guilty disingenuousness, that he never would marry Miss Linley. Life was altogether at a low ebb with him. When he got better he was sent into the country to Waltham Abbey, no doubt by way of weaning him from all the seductions of Bath, and the vicinity of the lovely young singer who had resumed her profession though she hated it, and was to be seen of all men except the faithful lover who was her husband, though nobody knew.

Before we conclude this chapter of young life, which reads so like an argument to the *Rivals* or some similar play, we may indicate some of Sheridan's early productions which, common as the pretty art of verse-making was, showed something more than the facile knack of composition, which is one of what were entitled in that day "the elegant qualifications" of golden youth. Sacred to Eliza Linley, as well as the verses about "the moss-covered grotto," was the following graceful snatch of song, which is pretty enough to be got by heart and sung by love-sick youths in many generations to some pretty *rococo* air as fantastic as itself: —

"Dry be that tear, my gentlest love,
Be hush'd that struggling sigh;
Nor seasons, day, nor fate shall prove
More fix'd, more true than I.
Hush'd be that sigh, be dry that tear,
Cease boding doubt, cease anxious fear,
Dry be that tear.

Ask'st thou how long my love will stay,
When all that's new is past?

How long, ah Delia, can I say,
How long my life will last?
Dry be that tear, be hush'd that sigh,
At least I'll love thee till I die.
Hush'd be that sigh.

And does that thought affect thee too,
The thought of Sylvio's death,
That he who only breath'd for you
Must yield his faithful breath?
Hush'd be that sigh, be dry that tear,
Nor let us lose our heaven here.
Dry be that tear."

Moore, with a pedantry which is sufficiently absurd, having just traced an expression in the "moss-covered grotto" to a classical authority, though with a doubt very favourable to his own scholarship, "whether Sheridan was likely to have been a reader of Augurianus," finds a close resemblance in the above to "one of the madrigals of Montreuil," or perhaps to "an Italian song of Ménage." Very likely it resembled all those pretty things, the *rococo* age being not yet over and such elegant trifles still in fashion—as indeed they will always be as long as youth and its sweet follies last.

Other pretty bits of verse might be quoted, especially one which brings in another delightful literary association into the story. Lady Margaret Fordyce—the beloved sister at whose departure from the old home in Fife Lady Anne Lindsay was so dejected, that to console herself she sang the woes, more plaintive still than her own, of that immortal peasant lass who married Auld Robin Gray—was then in Bath, and had been dismissed by a local versifier in his description of the beauties of the place by a couplet about a dimple, which roused young

Sheridan's wrath. "Could you," he cries, addressing the poetaster—

> "Could you really discover,
> In gazing those sweet beauties over,
> No other charm, no winning grace,
> Adorning either mind or face,
> But one poor dimple to express
> The quintessence of loveliness?
>
> Mark'd you her cheek of rosy hue?
> Mark'd you her eye of sparkling blue?
> That eye in liquid circles moving,
> That cheek, abash'd at man's approving:
> The one Love's arrows darting round,
> The other blushing at the wound;
> Did she not speak, did she not move,
> Now Pallas—now the Queen of Love?"

The latter lines are often quoted, but it is pretty to know that it was of Lady Anne's Margaret that they were said.

It is probably also to his period of seclusion and leisure at Waltham that the early dramatic attempts found by Moore among the papers confided to him belong. One of these runs to the length of three acts, and is a work of the most fantastic description, embodying, so far as it goes, the life of a band of outlaws calling themselves Devils, who have their headquarters in a forest and keep the neighbourhood in alarm. The heroine, a mysterious and beautiful maiden, is secluded in a cave from which she has never been allowed to go out, nor has she ever seen the face of man except that of the old hermit, who is her guardian. She has been permitted, however, one glimpse of a certain young huntsman, whom she considers a phantom, until a second sight of him when he is taken

prisoner by the robbers, and unaccountably introduced into the cave where she lies asleep, convinces her of his reality, and naturally has the same effect upon her which the sudden apparition of Prince Ferdinand had upon Miranda. The scene is pretty enough as the work of a sentimental youth in an age addicted to the highflown everywhere, and especially on the stage. The hero, when unbound and left to himself, begins his soliloquy, as a matter of course, with a "Ha! where am I?" but changes his tone from despair to rapture when he sees the fair Reginilla whose acquaintance he had so mysteriously made. "Oh, would she but wake and bless this gloom with her bright eyes," he says, after half a page. "Soft, here's a lute: perhaps her soul will know the call of harmony." Mrs. Radcliffe's lovely heroines, at a still later period, carried their lutes about with them everywhere, and tuned them to the utterance of a favourite copy of verses in the most terrible circumstances; so that the discovery of so handy an instrument in a robber's cave occasioned no surprise to the young hero. The song he immediately sung has been, Moore confesses, manipulated by himself. "I have taken the liberty of supplying a few rhymes and words that are wanting," he says, so that we need not quote it as an example of Sheridan. But the performance has its desired effect and the lady wakes.

"*Reg.* (*waking*). The phantom, father! (*seizes his hand*) Oh, do not—do not wake me thus.

Huntsman (*kneeling*). Thou beauteous sun of this dark world, that mak'st a place so like the cave of death a heaven to me, instruct me how I may approach thee—how address thee and not offend.

Reg. Oh, how my soul could hang upon those lips. Speak

on! and yet methinks he should not kneel. Why are you afraid, sir? indeed I cannot hurt you.

Hunts. Sweet Innocence, I am sure thou would'st not.

Reg. Art thou not he to whom I told my name, and did'st thou not say thine was ——

Hunts. Oh blessed was the name that then thou told'st—it has been ever since my charm and kept me from distraction. But may I ask how such sweet excellence as thine could be hid in such a place?

Reg. Alas! I know not—for such as thou I never saw before, nor any like myself.

Hunts. Nor like thee ever shall; but would'st leave this place and live with such as I am?

Reg. Why may not you live here with such as I?

Hunts. Yes, but I would carry thee where all above an azure canopy extends, at night bedropt with gems, and one more glorious lamp that yields such beautiful light as love enjoys; while underneath a carpet shall be spread of flowers to court the presence of thy step, with such sweet-whispered invitations from the leaves of shady groves or murmuring of silver streams, that thou shalt think thou art in paradise.

Reg. Indeed!

Hunts. Ay, and I'll watch and wait on thee all day, and cull the choicest flowers, which while thou bind'st in the mysterious knot of love, I'll tune for thee no vulgar lays, or tell thee tales shall make thee weep, yet please thee, while thus I press thy hand, and warm it thus with kisses.

Reg. I doubt thee not—but then my Governor has told me many a tale of faithless men, who court a lady but to steal her peace. . . . Then, wherefore could'st thou not live here? For I do feel, though tenfold darkness did surround this spot, I would be blest would you but stay here; and if it make you sad to be imprisoned thus, I'd sing and play for thee, and dress thee sweetest fruits, and though you chide me would kiss thy tears away, and hide my blushing face upon thy bosom: indeed I would. Then what avails the gaudy days, and all the evil things I'm told inhabit them, to those who have within themselves all that delight and love and heaven can give?

Hunts. My angel, thou hast indeed the soul of love.

Reg. It is no ill thing, is it?

Hunts. Oh most divine—it is the immediate gift of heaven ——"

And then the lute is brought into requisition once more. Other scenes of a much less superfine description, in one of which the hero takes the semblance of a dancing bear, go on outside this sentimental retirement, and some humour is expended on the trial of various prisoners secured by the robbers, who are made to believe that they have left this world and are being brought up before a kind of Pluto for judgment. This inflexible judge orders "baths of flaming sulphur and the caldron of boiling lead" for one who confesses himself to have been a courtier; the culprit's part, however, is taken by a compassionate devil who begs that he may be soaked a little first in scalding brimstone to prepare him for his final sentence.

Another unfinished sketch called the *Foresters* deals with effects not quite so violent. To the end of his life Sheridan would threaten smilingly to produce this play and outdo everything else with it, but the existing framework seems to have been of the very slightest. Probably to a much later period belongs the projected play upon the subject of *Affectation*, for which were intended many memorandums found written upon the paper books in which his thoughts were noted. The subject is one which, in the opinion of various critics, would have been specially adapted to Sheridan's powers, and Moore, and many others following him, express regret that it should have been abandoned. But no doubt Sheridan's instinct warned him that on no such set plan could his faculties work, and that the stage, however adapted to the display of individual eccen-

tricities, wants something more than a bundle of embodied *fads* to make its performances tell. Sir Bubble Bon, Sir Peregrine Paradox, the representative "man who delights in hurry and interruption," the "man intriguing only for the reputation of it," the "lady who affects poetry," and all the rest, do well enough for the table-talk of the imagination, or even to jot down and play with in a note-book; but Sheridan was better inspired than to attempt to make them into a play. He had already among these memorandums of his the first ideas of almost all his future productions, the primitive notes afterwards to be developed into the brilliant malice of the scandal-mongers, the first conception of old Teazle, the earliest adumbration of the immortal Puff. But the little verses which we have already quoted were the best of his actual achievements at this early period, dictated as they were by the early passion which made the careless boy into a man.

At least one other poetical address of a similar description—stilted, yet not without a tender breath of pastoral sweetness—was addressed to Eliza after she became Sheridan's wife, and told how Silvio reclined upon "Avon's ridgy bank"—

"Did mock the meadow's flowing pride,
Rail'd at the dawn and sportive ring;
The tabour's call he did deride
And said, It was not Spring.

He scorned the sky of azure blue,
He scorned whate'er could mirth bespeak,
He chid the beam that drank the dew,
And chid the gale that fanned his glowing cheek.
Unpaid the season's wonted lay,
For still he sighed and said, It was not May."

Which is of course explained by the circumstance that Delia (for the nonce called Laura) was not there. Laura responded in verses not much worse. It was a pretty commerce, breathing full of the time when shepherds and shepherdesses were still the favourites of dainty poetry—a fashion which seems in some danger of returning with the other quaintnesses of the time. But this was after the young pair were united; and in 1772, when he had recovered of his wounds, and was making what shift he could to occupy himself in the solitude of Waltham, studying a little for a variety, reading up the History of England and the works of Sir William Temple, by way of improving his mind, that blessed event seemed distant and unlikely enough.

In the Lent of 1773, Miss Linley came to London to sing in the oratorios, and it is said that young Sheridan resorted to the most romantic expedients to see her. He was near enough to "tread on the heels of perilous probabilities,"—a phrase which Moore quotes from one of his letters,—and is said to have come from Waltham to London, and to have disguised himself as a hackney coachman, and driven her home from her performances on several occasions. The anonymous author of *Sheridan and his Times* asserts that on one of these occasions, by some accident, the lady was alone, and that this opportunity of communication led to a series of meetings, which at length convinced the parents that further resistance was hopeless. During all this time it would appear the marriage at Calais was never referred to, and was thought nothing of, even by the parties most concerned. It was intended apparently as a safeguard to Delia's reputation should need occur, but as nothing

more; which says a great deal for the romantic generosity of so ardent a lover and so penniless a man. For Delia had her little fortune, besides all the other charms which spoke so much more eloquently to her Silvio's heart, and was indeed a liberal income in herself, to any one who would take advantage of it, with that lovely voice of hers. But the young man was romantically magnanimous and highflying in his sense of honour. He was indeed a very poor match,—a youth without a penny, even without a profession, and no visible means of living,—for the adored siren, about whom wealthy suitors were dangling by the dozen, no doubt exciting many anxious hopes in the breasts of her parents, if not in her own faithful bosom. But love conquered in the long run, as an honest and honourable sentiment, if it lasts and can wait, is pretty sure to do. In April 1773, about a year from the time of their clandestine marriage at Calais, they were married in the eye of day, with all that was needful to make the union dignified and respectable; and thus the bustling little romance so full of incident, so entirely ready for the use of the drama, so like all the favourite stage-combinations of the time, came to an end. We do not hear very much of Mrs. Sheridan afterwards: indeed, except the letter to which we have referred, she does little to disclose her personality at any time, but there is something engaging and attractive—a sort of faint but sweet reflection raying out from her through all her life. The Lydia Languish of early days—the sentimental and romantic heroine of so many persecutions and pursuits, of the midnight flight and secret marriage—developed into one of those favourites of society, half-artist, half-fine-lady, whose exertions

for the amusement of the world bring nothing to them but a half-fictitious position and dangerous flatteries, without even the public singer's substantial reward—a class embracing many charming and attractive women, victims of their own gifts and graces. Mrs. Sheridan was, however, at the same time—at least in all the early part of her career—a devoted wife, and seems to have done her best for her brilliant husband, and formed no small item in his success as well as in his happiness as long as her existence lasted. It is said that she disliked the life of a singer, and it is certain that she acquiesced in his resolution to withdraw her from all public appearances; but even in that point it is very likely that there was some unconsidered sacrifice in her submission. "Hers was truly a voice as of the church choir," says a contemporary quoted by Moore, "and she was always ready to sing without any pressing. She sang here a great deal and to my infinite delight: but what had a peculiar charm was that she used to take my daughter, then a child, on her lap, and sing a number of childish songs with such a playfulness of manner and such a sweetness of look and voice as was quite enchanting."

CHAPTER II.

HIS FIRST DRAMATIC WORKS.

MARRIED at last and happy, after so much experience of disappointment and hope deferred, Sheridan and his young wife took a cottage in the country, and retired there to enjoy their long-wished-for life together, and to consider an important, but it would seem not absolutely essential point—what they were to do for their living. Up to this point they have been so entirely the personages of a drama, that it is quite in order that they should retire to a rose-covered cottage, with nothing particular to live upon; and that the young husband, though without any trade of his own by which he could earn a dinner, should magnificently waive off all offers of employment for his wife, who had a trade—and a profitable one. He was still but twenty-two and she nineteen, and he had hitherto managed to get all that was necessary, besides post-chaises and a considerable share of the luxuries of the time, as the lilies get their bravery, without toiling or spinning, so that it is evident the young man confronted fate with very little alarm, and his proud attitude of family head and master of his own wife is in the highest degree edifying as well as amusing. We can scarcely

help doubting greatly whether a prima donna even of nineteen would let herself be disposed of now by such an absolute authority. The tone of the letter in which he communicates to his father-in-law his lofty determination in this respect will show the young men of to-day the value of the privileges which they have, it is to be feared, partially resigned.

"Yours of the 3d instant did not reach me till yesterday, by reason of its missing us at Morden. As to the principal point it treats of, I had given my answer some days ago to Mr. Isaac of Worcester. He had enclosed a letter from Storace to my wife, in which he dwells much on the nature of the agreement you had made for her eight months ago, and adds that 'as this is no new application, but a request that you (Mrs. S.) will fulfil a positive engagement, the breach of which would prove of fatal consequence to our meeting, I hope Mr. Sheridan will think his honour in some degree concerned in fulfilling it.' Mr. Storace, in order to enforce Mr. Isaac's argument, showed me his letter on the same subject to him, which begins with saying, 'We must have Mrs. Sheridan somehow or other if possible, the plain English of which is that if her husband is not willing to let her perform, we will persuade him that he acts *dishonourably* in preventing her from fulfilling a positive engagement.' This I conceive to be the very worst mode of application that could have been taken; as there really is not common sense in the idea that my *honour* can be concerned in my wife's fulfilling an engagement which it is impossible she should ever have made. Nor (as I wrote to Mr. Isaac) can you who gave the promise, whatever it was, be in the least charged with the breach of it, as your daughter's marriage was an event which must always have been looked to by them as quite as natural a period to your rights over her as her death. And in my opinion it would have been just as reasonable to have applied to you to fulfil your engagement in the latter case than in the former. As to the imprudence of declining this engagement, I do not think, even were we to suppose that my wife should ever on

any occasion appear again in public, there would be the least at present. For instance, I have had a gentleman with me from Oxford (where they do not claim the least right as from an engagement) who has endeavoured to place the idea of my complimenting the university with Betsey's performance in the strongest light of advantage to me. This he said on my declining to let her perform on any agreement. He likewise informed me that he had just left Lord North (the Chancellor), who, he assured me, would look upon it as the highest compliment, and had expressed himself so to him. Now, should it be a point of inclination or convenience to me to break my resolution with regard to Betsey's performing, there surely would be more sense in obliging Lord North (and probably from his own application) than Lord Coventry and Mr. Isaac; for were she to sing at Worcester, there would not be the least compliment in her performing at Oxford."

The poor pretty wife, smiling passive in the background while my young lord considers whether he will "compliment the university" with her performance, is a spectacle which ought to be impressive to the brides of the present day, who take another view of their position; but there is a delightful humour in this turning of the tables upon the stern father who had so often snubbed young Sheridan, and who must have regarded, one would suppose, his present impotence and the sublime superiority of the new proprietor of Betsey with anything but pleasant feelings. Altogether the attitude of the group is very instructive in view of the changes of public opinion on this point. The most arbitrary husband now-a-days would think it expedient at least to associate his wife's name with his own in any such refusal; but the proprietorship was undoubting in Sheridan's day. It will be remembered that Dr. Johnson highly applauded the young gentleman's spirit and resolution in this point.

However, though she had so soon become Betsey and his property, so far as business was concerned, the cottage at East Burnham among the beech trees and roses, still contained a tender pair of lovers; and Silvio still addressed to Delia the sweetest compliments in verse. When he is absent he appeals to Hymen to find some thing for him to do to make the hours pass when away from her.

"Alas! thou hast no wings, oh Time,
It was some thoughtless lover's rhyme,
Who, writing in his Chloe's view,
Paid her the compliment through you.
For had he, if he truly lov'd,
But once the pangs of absence prov'd,
He'd cropt thy wings, and in their stead
Have painted thee with heels of lead."

Thus Betsey's chains were gilded: and in all likelihood she was totally unconscious of them, never having been awakened to any right of womankind beyond that of being loved and flattered. The verse is not of very high quality, but the sentiment is charming, and entirely appropriate to the position.

"For me who, when I'm happy, owe
No thanks to fortune that I'm so,
Who long have learn'd to look at one
Dear object, and at one alone,
For all the joy and all the sorrow,
That gilds the day or threats the morrow.
I never felt thy footsteps light
But when sweet love did aid thy flight,
And banished from his blest dominion,
I car'd not for thy borrowed pinion.
True, she is mine; and since she's mine
At trifles I should not repine;
But oh! the miser's real pleasure
Is not in knowing he has treasure;

He must behold his golden store,
And feel and count his riches o'er.
Thus I of one dear gem possest,
And in that treasure only blest,
There every day would seek delight,
And clasp the casket every night."

The condition of the young pair in any reasonable point of view at this beginning of their life was as little hopeful as can be conceived. The three thousand pounds left to Miss Linley by Mr. Long was their sole fortune, if it still remained intact. The wife was rendered helpless by the husband's grand prohibition of her exertions, and he himself had nothing to do, nor knew how to do anything: for even to literature, that invariable refuge, he scarcely seems as yet to have turned his eyes with any serious intent. The manner in which they plunged into life, however, is characteristic. When winter made their Burnham cottage undesirable, and the time of honeymooning was well over, they went to town to live with the composer Storace, where no doubt Betsey's talent was largely exercised, though not in public, and probably helped to make friends for the young pair: for we hear of them next year as paying visits among other places at the house of Canning; and in the winter of 1774 they established themselves in Orchard Street, Portman Square, in a house of their own, furnished, an anonymous biographer says, "in the most costly style," at the expense of Linley, with perhaps some contribution from that inexhaustible three thousand pounds.

"His house was open," says this historian, "for the reception of guests of quality attracted by his wit, the superior accomplishments of his wife, and the elegance of his enter-

tainments. His dinners were upon the most expensive scale, his wines of the finest quality: while Mrs. Sheridan's soirées were remarkable not more for their brilliance than the gay groups of the most beautiful, accomplished, and titled lady visitants of the Court of St. James. Mrs. Sheridan's routs were the great attraction of the season. A friend—a warm and sincere friend—remonstrating with Sheridan on the instability of his means of supporting such a costly establishment, he tersely replied, 'My dear friend, it is my means.'"

Such a description will be taken for what it is worth, but there seems internal evidence that the anecdote with which it concludes might have been true. And certainly for a young man beginning the arduous occupation of living on his wits, a pretty house and prettier wife and good music would form an excellent stock-in-trade, and the new home itself being entirely beyond any visible means they had, every other prodigality would be comprehensible. By this time he had begun the composition of a play, and considered himself on the eve of publishing a book, which, he "thinks, will do me some credit," as he informs his father-in-law, but which has never been heard of from that time to this, so far as appears. Another piece of information contained in the letter in which this apocryphal work is announced, shows for the first time a better prospect for the young adventurer. He adds, "There will be a comedy of mine in rehearsal at Covent Garden within a few days."

"I have done it at Mr. Harris's (the manager's) own request: it is now complete in his hands, and preparing for the stage. He and some of his friends also who have heard it assure me in the most flattering terms that there is not a doubt of its success. It will be very well played, and Harris tells me that the least shilling I shall get (if it succeeds) will be six hundred pounds. I shall make no secret of it towards the time of

representation, that it may not lose any support my friends can give it. I had not written a line of it two months ago, except a scene or two, which I believe you have seen in an odd act of a little farce."

This was the *Rivals*, which was performed at Covent Garden on the 17th January 1775—nearly three years after his marriage. How he existed in the meantime, and made friends and kept up his London house, is left to the imagination. Probably it was done upon that famous three thousand pounds, which appears, like the widow's cruse, to answer all demands.

The *Rivals* was not successful the first night, and the hopes of the young dramatist must have met with a terrible check; but the substitution of one actor for another in the part of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, and such emendations as practical sense suggested as soon as it had been put on the stage, secured for it one continued triumph ever after. It is now more than a century since critical London watched the new comedy, and the hearts of the Linleys thrilled from London to Bath, and old Thomas Sheridan, still unreconciled to his son, came silent and sarcastic to the theatre to see what the young good-for-nothing had made of it; but the world has never changed its opinion. What a moment for Betsey in the house where she had everything that heart of woman could desire except the knowledge that all was honest and paid for—a luxury which outdoes all the rest! and for her husband, standing in the wings watching his father's face, whom he dared not go and speak to, and knowing that his whole future hung in the balance, and that in case of success all his follies would be justified! "But now there can be no doubt of its success," cries

little Miss Linley from Bath, in a flutter of excitement, "as it has certainly got through more difficulties than any comedy which has not met its doom the first night." The Linleys were convinced in their own minds that it was Mrs. Sheridan who had written "the much admired epilogue." "How I long to read it!" cries the little sister. "What makes it more certain is that my *father* guessed it was *yours* the first time he saw it praised in the paper." There is no reason to suppose that the guess was true, but it is a pretty exhibition of family feeling.

The *Rivals*, to the ordinary spectator who, looking on with uncritical pleasure at the progress of that episode of mimic life, in which everybody's remarks are full of such a quintessence of wit as only a very few remarkable persons are able to emulate in actual existence, accepts the piece for the sake of these and other qualities—is so little like a transcript from any actual conditions of humanity that to consider it as studied from the life would be absurd, and we receive these creations of fancy as belonging to a world entirely apart from the real. But the reader who has accompanied Sheridan through the previous chapter of his history will be inclined, on the contrary, to feel that the young dramatist has but selected a few incidents from the still more curious comedy of life in which he himself had so recently been one of the actors, and in which elopements, duels, secret correspondences, and all the rest of the simple-artificial round, were the order of the day. Whether he drew his characters from the life it is needless to inquire, or if there was an actual prototype for Mrs. Malaprop. Nothing, however, in imagination is so highly fantastical as reality; and it is very likely that some two

or three ladies of much pretension and gentility flourished upon the parade and frequented the pump-room, from whose conversation her immortal parts of speech were appropriated: but this is of very little importance in comparison with the delightful success of the result. The *Rivals* is no such picture of life in Bath as that which, half a century later, in altered times, which yet were full of humours of their own, Miss Austen made for us in all the modest flutter of youthful life and hopes. Sheridan's brilliant dramatic sketch is slight in comparison, though far more instantly effective, and with a concentration in its sharp effects which the stage requires. But yet, no doubt, in the bustle and hurry of the successive arrivals, in the eager brushing up of the countryman new-launched on such a scene, and the aspect of the idle yet bustling society, all agog for excitement and pleasure, the brisk little holiday city was delightfully recognisable in the eyes of those to whom "the Bath" represented all those vacation rambles and excursions over the world which amuse our leisure now. Scarcely ever was play so full of liveliness and interest constructed upon a slighter machinery. The Rivals of the title, by means of the most simple yet amusing of mystifications, are one person. The gallant young lover, who is little more than the conventional type of that well-worn character, but a manly and lively one, has introduced himself to the romantic heroine in the character of Ensign Beverley, a poor young subaltern, instead of his own much more eligible personality as the heir of Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet with four thousand a year: and has gained the heart of the sentimental Lydia, who prefers love in a cottage to the finest settlements, and looks forward to an elopement and the

loss of a great part of her fortune with delight: when his plans are suddenly confounded by the arrival of his father on the scene, bent on marrying him forthwith in his own character to the same lady. Thus he is at the same time the romantic and adored Beverley, and the detested Captain Absolute in her eyes; and how to reconcile her to marrying peaceably and with the approval of all her belongings, instead of clandestinely and with all the *éclat* of a secret running away, is the problem. This, however, is solved precipitately by the expedient of a duel with the third rival, Bob Acres, which shows the fair Lydia that the safety of her Beverley, even if accompanied by the congratulations of friends and a humdrum marriage, is the one thing to be desired. Thus the whole action of the piece turns upon a mystification, which affords some delightfully comic scenes, but few of those occasions of suspense and uncertainty which give interest to the drama. This we find in the brisk and delightful movement of the piece, in the broad but most amusing sketches of character, and the unfailing wit and sparkle of the dialogue. In fact we believe that many an audience has enjoyed the play, and, what is more wonderful, many a reader laughed over it in private, without any clear realisation of the story at all, so completely do Sir Anthony's fits of temper, and Mrs. Malaprop's fine language and stately presence, and the swagger of Bob Acres, occupy and amuse us. Even Faulkland, the jealous and doubting, who invents a new misery for himself at every word, and finds an occasion for wretchedness even in the smiles of his mistress, which are always either too cold or too warm for him, is so laughable in his starts aside at every new suggestion of jealous fancy,

that we forgive him not only a great deal of fine language, but the still greater drawback of having nothing to do with the action of the piece at all.

Mrs. Malaprop's ingenious "derangement of epitaphs" is her chief distinction to the popular critic; and even though such a great competitor as Dogberry has occupied the ground before her, these delightful absurdities have never been surpassed. But justice has hardly been done to the individual character of this admirable if broad sketch of a personage quite familiar in such scenes as that which Bath presented a century ago, the plausible well-bred woman, with a great deal of vanity, and no small share of good-nature, whose inversion of phrases is quite representative of the blurred realisation she has of surrounding circumstances, and who is quite sincerely puzzled by the discovery that she is not so well qualified to enact the character of Delia as her niece would be. Mrs. Malaprop has none of the harshness of Mrs. Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and we take it unkind of Captain Absolute to call her "a weatherbeaten she-dragon." The complacent nod of her head, the smirk on her face, her delightful self-satisfaction and confidence in her "parts of speech," have nothing repulsive in them. No doubt she imposed upon Bob Acres; and could Catherine Morland and Mrs. Allen have seen her face and heard her talk, these ladies would, we feel sure, have been awed by her presence. And she is not unkind to Lydia, though the minx deserves it, and has no desire to appropriate her fortune. She smiles upon us still in many a watering-place—large, gracious, proud of her conversational powers, always a delightful figure to meet with, and filling the shopkeeping ladies with admiration.

Sir Anthony, though so amusing on the stage, is more conventional, since we know he must get angry presently whenever we meet with him, although his coming round again is equally certain: but Mrs. Malaprop is never quite to be calculated upon, and is always capable of a new simile as captivating as that of the immortal "allegory on the banks of the Nile."

The other characters, though full of brilliant talk, cleverness, and folly, have less originality. The country hobbledehoy, matured into a dandy and braggart by his entrance into the intoxicating excitement of Bath society, is comical in the highest degree; but he is not characteristically human. While Mrs. Malaprop can hold her ground with Dogberry, Bob Acres is not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with the "exquisite reasons" of that delightful knight, Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. And thus it becomes at once apparent that Sheridan's eye for a situation, and the details that make up a striking combination on the stage, was far more remarkable than his insight into human motives and action. There is no scene on the stage which retains its power of amusing an ordinary audience more brilliantly than that of the proposed duel, where the wittiest of boobies confesses to feeling his valour ooze out at his finger ends, and the fire-eating Sir Lucius promises, to console him, that he shall be pickled and sent home to rest with his fathers, if not content with the snug lying in the abbey. The two men are little more than symbols of the slightest description, but their dialogue is instinct with wit, and that fun, the most English of qualities, which does not reach the height of humour, yet overwhelms even gravity itself with a

laughter in which there is no sting or bitterness. Molière sometimes attains this effect, but rarely, having too much meaning in him; but with Shakespeare it is frequent among higher things. And in Sheridan this gift of innocent ridicule and quick embodiment of the ludicrous without malice or *arrière-pensée* reaches to such heights of excellence as have given his nonsense a sort of immortality.

It is, however, difficult to go far in discussion or analysis of a literary production which attempts no deeper investigation into human nature than this. Sheridan's art, from its very beginning, was theatrical, if we may use the word, rather than dramatic. It aimed at strong situations and highly effective scenes rather than at a finely constructed story, or the working out of either plot or passion. There is nothing to be discovered in it by the student, as in those loftier dramas which deal with the higher qualities and developments of the human spirit. It is possible to excite a very warm controversy in almost any company of ordinarily educated people at any moment upon the character of Hamlet. And criticism will always find another word to say even upon the less profound but delightful mysteries of such a poetical creation as Rosalind, all glowing with ever-varied life and love and fancy. But the lighter drama with which we have now to deal hides no depths under its brilliant surface. The pretty fantastical Lydia, with her romances, her impatience of ordinary life, her hot little spark of temper, was new to the stage, and when she finds a fitting representative can be made delightful upon it: but there is nothing further to find out about her. The art is charming, the figures full of vivacity,

the touch that sets them before us exquisite: except indeed in the Faulkland scenes, probably intended as a foil for the brilliancy of the others, in which Julia's magnificent phrases are too much for us, and make us deeply grateful to Sheridan for the discrimination which kept him—save in one appalling instance—from the serious drama. But there are no depths to be sounded, and no suggestions to be carried out. While, however, its merits as literature are thus lessened, its attractions as a play are increased. There never was a comedy more dear to actors, as there never was one more popular on the stage. The even balance of its characters, the equality of the parts, scarcely one of them being quite insignificant, and each affording scope enough for a good player to show what is in him, must make it always popular in the profession. It is, from the same reason, the delight of amateurs.

Moore quotes from an old copy of the play, a humorous dedication written by Tickell, Sheridan's brother-in-law, to Indolence. "There is a propriety in prefixing your name to a work begun entirely at your suggestion and finished under your auspices," Tickell says; and notwithstanding his biographer's attempt to prove that Sheridan polished all he wrote with extreme care, and cast and recast his literary efforts, there is an air of ease and lightness in his earlier work which makes the dedication sufficiently appropriate. It must have amused his own fancy while he wrote, as it has amused his audience ever since. It is the one blossom of production which had yet appeared in so many easy years. A wide margin of leisure, of pleasure, of facile life, extends around it. It was done quickly it appears when once undertaken—a pleasing variety upon the featureless course of months

and years. The preface which Sheridan himself prefixed to the play when printed, justifies itself on the score that "the success of the piece has probably been founded on a circumstance which the author is informed has not before attended a theatrical trial."

"I need scarcely add that the circumstance alluded to was the withdrawing of the piece to remove these imperfections in the first representation which were too obvious to escape reprehension, and too numerous to admit of a hasty correction. . . . It were unnecessary to enter into any further extenuation of what was thought exceptionable in this play, but that it has been said that the managers should have prevented some of the defects before its appearance to the public—and, in particular, the uncommon length of the piece as represented the first night. It were an ill return for the most liberal and gentlemanly conduct on their side to suffer any censure to rest where none was deserved. Hurry in writing has long been exploded as an excuse for an author; however, in the dramatic line, it may happen that both an author and a manager may wish to fill a chasm in the entertainment of the public with a hastiness not altogether culpable. The season was advanced when I first put the play into Mr. Harris's hands; it was at that time at least double the length of any acting comedy. I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailing of it, till I believe his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness, and he left so many excrescences remaining because he had assisted in pruning so many more. Hence, though I was not uninformed that the acts were still too long, I flattered myself that after the first trial I might with safer judgment proceed to remove what should appear to have been most dissatisfactory."

These were, it is true, days of leisure, when nothing was pushed and hurried on as now. But it would require, one would think, no little firmness and courage on the part of a young author to risk the emendation of errors so serious after an unfavourable first-night, and a great

confidence on the part of the manager to permit such an experiment. But there are some men who impress all around them with such a certainty of power and success, that even managers dare, and publishers volunteer, in their favour. Sheridan was evidently one of these men. There was an atmosphere of triumph about him. He had carried off his siren from all competitors; he had defied all inducements to give her up to public hearing after; he had flown in the face of prudence and every frugal tradition. And so far as an easy and happy life went, he was apparently succeeding in that attempt. So he was allowed to take his unsuccessful comedy off the stage, and trim it into his own guise of triumph. We are not told how long the interval was, which would have been instructive (the anonymous biographer says "a few days"). It was produced in January, however, and a month later we hear of it in preparation at Bath, where its success was extraordinary. The same witness, whom we have just quoted, adds, "that Sheridan's prospective six hundred pounds was more than doubled by its success and the liberality of the manager."

He had thus entered fully upon his career as a dramatist. In the same year he wrote—in gratitude, it is said, to the Irish actor who had saved the *Rivals* by his felicitous representation of Sir Lucius—the farce called *St. Patrick's Day; or, the Scheming Lieutenant*, a very slight production, founded on the tricks so familiar to comedy, of a lover's ingenuity to get entrance into the house of his mistress. The few opening sentences, which are entirely characteristic of Sheridan, are almost the best part of the production: they are spoken by a party of soldiers coming with a complaint to their officer.

"1*st Sol.* I say, you are wrong; we should all speak together, each for himself, and all at once, that we may be heard the better.

2*d Sol.* Right, Jack; we'll argue in platoons.

3*d Sol.* Ay, ay, let him have our grievances in a volley."

The lieutenant, whose suit is scorned by the parents of his Lauretta, contrives by the aid of a certain Dr. Rosy, a comic, but not very comic, somewhat long-winded personage, to get into the house of Justice Credulous, her father, as a servant: but is discovered and turned out. He then writes a letter asserting that, in his first disguise, he has given the Justice poison, an assertion which is met with perfect faith; upon which he comes in again as the famous quack doctor, so familiar to us in the pages of Molière. In this case the quack is a German, speaking only a barbarous jargon, but he speedily cures the Justice on condition of receiving the hand of his daughter. "Did he say all that in so few words," cried Justice Credulous, when one of the stranger's utterances is explained to him. "What a fine language it is!"—just as M. Jourdain delightedly acknowledged the eloquence of *la langue Turque*, which could express *tant de choses dans un seul mot.* The *Scheming Lieutenant* still keeps its ground among Sheridan's works, bound up between the *Rivals* and the *School for Scandal*, a position in which one cannot help feeling it must be much astonished to find itself.

In the end of the year the opera of the *Duenna* was also produced at Covent Garden. The praise and immediate appreciation with which it was received were still greater than those that hailed the *Rivals.* "The run of this opera has, I believe, no parallel in the annals of the

drama," says Moore, speaking in days when the theatre had other rules than those known among ourselves. "Sixty-three nights was the career of the *Beggar's Opera;* but the *Duenna* was acted no less than seventy-five times during the season," and the enthusiasm which it called forth was general. It was pronounced better than the *Beggar's Opera*, up to that time acknowledged to be the first and finest production of the never very successful school of English opera. Opera at all was as yet an exotic in England, and the public still resented the importation of Italian music and Italian singers to give it utterance, and fondly clung to the idea of being able to produce as good or better at home. The *Duenna* was a joint work in which Sheridan was glad to associate with himself his father-in-law, Linley, whose airs to the songs, which were plentifully introduced—and which gave its name to what is in reality a short comedy on the lines of Molière, interspersed with songs, and not an opera in the usual sense of the word at all—were much commended at the time. The little lyrics which are put indiscriminately into the mouths of the different personages are often extremely pretty; but few people in these days have heard them sung, though lines from the verses are still familiar enough to our ears in the way of quotation. The story of the piece belongs to the same easy artificial inspiration which dictated the trivial plot of *St. Patrick's Day*, and of so many others. It is "mainly founded," says Moore, "upon an incident borrowed from the *Country Wife* of Wycherley," but it seems hardly necessary to seek a parent for so *banal* a contrivance. The father, with whom we are all so familiar, has to be tricked out of his daughter by one of the monotonous lovers with whom we are more familiar still; but

instead of waiting till her gallant shall invent a plan for this purpose, the lady cuts the knot herself by the help of her duenna, who has no objection to marry the rich Jew whom Louisa abhors, and who remains in the garb of her young mistress, while the latter escapes in the duenna's hood and veil. The Portuguese Isaac from whom the lady flies is a crafty simpleton, and when he finds the old duenna waiting for him under the name of Louisa (whom her father, for the convenience of the plot, has vowed never to see till she is married), he accepts her, though much startled by her venerable and unlovely appearance, as the beautiful creature who has been promised to him, with only the rueful reflection to himself, "How blind some parents are!" and as she explains that she also has made a vow never to accept a husband from her father's hands, carries her off, as she suggests, with much simplicity and the astute reflection, "If I take her at her word I secure her fortune and avoid making any settlement in return." In the meantime two pairs of interesting lovers, Louisa and her Antonio, her brother Ferdinand and his Clara, are wandering about in various disguises, with a few quarrels and reconciliations, and a great many songs, which they pause to sing at the most inappropriate moments, after the fashion of opera. In order to be married—which all are anxious to be—Isaac and one of the young gallants go to a "neighbouring monastery," such establishments being delightfully handy in Seville, where the scene is laid; and the hot Protestantism of the audience is delighted by an ecclesiastical interior, in which "Father Paul, Father Francis, and other friars are discovered at a table drinking," singing convivial songs, and promising to remember their peni-

tents in their cups, which will do quite as much good as masses. Father Paul is the supposed ascetic of the party, and comes forward when called with a glass of wine in his hand, chiding them for having disturbed his devotions. The three couples are then married by this worthy functionary, and the whole ends with a scene at the house of the father, when the trick is revealed to him, and amid general blessings and forgiveness the Jew discovers that he has married the penniless duenna instead of the lady with a fortune, whom he has helped to deceive himself as well as her father. The duenna, who has been, like all the old ladies in these plays, the subject of a great many unmannerly remarks,—when an old woman is concerned, Sheridan's fine gentlemen always forget their manners,—is revealed in all her poverty and ugliness beside the pretty young ladies; and Isaac's conceit and admiration of himself, "a sly little villain, a cunning dog," etc., are unmercifully laughed at; while the rest of the party make up matters with the easily mollified papa.

Such is the story: there is very little character attempted, save in Isaac, who is a sort of rudimentary sketch of a too cunning knave or artful simpleton caught in his own toils; and the dialogue, if sometimes clever enough, never for a moment reaches the sparkle of the *Rivals*. "The wit of the dialogue," Moore says—using that clever mist of words with which an experienced writer hides the fact that he can find nothing to say on a certain subject—"except in one or two instances, is of that amusing kind which lies near the surface—which is produced without effort, and may be enjoyed without wonder." If this means that there is nothing at all

wonderful about it, it is no doubt true enough—though there are one or two phrases which are worth preserving, such as that in which the Jew is described as being "like the blank leaves between the Old and New Testament," since he is a convert of recent date and no very certain faith.

It was, however, the music which made the piece popular, and the songs which Sheridan wrote for Linley's setting were many of them pretty, and all neat and clever. Everybody knows "Had I a heart for falsehood framed," which is sung by the walking gentleman of the piece, a certain Don Carlos, who has nothing to do but to take care of Louisa during her wanderings, and to sing some of the prettiest songs. Perhaps on the whole this is the best:—

"Had I a heart for falsehood framed,
I ne'er could injure you;
For though your tongue no promise claim'd
Your charms would make me true.
To you no soul shall bear deceit,
No stranger offer wrong;
But friends in all the aged you'll meet,
And lovers in the young.

"But when they learn that you have blest
Another with your heart,
They'll bid aspiring passion cease
And act a brother's part.
Then, lady, dread not here deceit,
Nor fear to suffer wrong;
For friends in all the aged you'll meet,
And lovers in the young."

The part of Carlos is put in with Sheridan's usual indifference to construction for the sake of the music, and in order to employ a certain tenor who was a favourite

with the public, there being no possible occasion for him so far as the dramatic action is concerned.

This is what Byron, nearly half a century after, called "the best opera" in English, and which was lauded to the skies in its day. The *Beggar's Opera*, with which it is constantly compared, has, however, much outlived it in the general knowledge, if the galvanic and forced resurrection given by an occasional performance can be called life. The songs are sung no longer, and many who quote lines like the well-known "Sure such a pair were never seen," are in most cases totally unaware where they come from. Posterity, which has so thoroughly carried out the judgment of contemporaries in respect to the *Rivals*, has not extended its favour to the *Duenna*. Perhaps the attempt to conjoin spoken dialogue to any great extent with music is never a very successful attempt: for English opera does not seem to last. Its success is momentary. Musical enthusiasts care little for the "words," and not even so much for melody as might be desired; and the genuine playgoer is impatient of those interruptions to the action of a piece which has any pretence at dramatic interest, while neither of the conjoint Arts do their best in such a formal copartnery. Sheridan, however, spared no pains to make the partnership successful. He was very anxious that the composer should be on the spot, and secure that his compositions were done full justice to. "Harris is extravagantly sanguine of its success as to plot and dialogue," he writes; "they will exert themselves to the utmost in the scenery, etc., but I never saw any one so disconcerted as he was at the idea of there being no one to put them in the right way as to music." "Dearest father,"

adds Mrs. Sheridan, "I shall have no spirits or hopes of the opera unless we see you." The young dramatist, however, had his ideas as to the music as well as the literary portion of the piece, and did not submit himself blindly to his father-in-law's experience. "The first," he says, "I should wish to be a pert sprightly air, for though some of the words mayn't seem suited to it, I should mention that they are neither of them in earnest in what they say: Leoni (Carlos) takes it up seriously, and I want him to show advantageously in the six lines beginning, 'Gentle Maid.' I should tell you that he sings nothing well but in a plaintive or pastoral style, and his voice is such as appears to me always to be hurt by much accompaniment. I have observed, too, that he never gets so much applause as when he makes a cadence. Therefore my idea is that he should make a flourish at 'Shall I grieve you.'" These instructions show how warmly Sheridan at this period of his life interested himself in every detail of his theatrical work. Linley, it is said, had the good sense to follow these directions implicitly.

The success of the *Duenna* at Covent Garden put Garrick and his company at the rival theatre on their mettle; and it was wittily said that "the old woman would be the death of the old man." Garrick chose the moment when her son was proving so dangerous a rival to him to resuscitate Mrs. Sheridan's play called the *Discovery*, in which he himself played the chief part—a proceeding which does not look very friendly: and as Thomas Sheridan had been put forth by his enemies as the great actor's rival, it might well be that there was no very kind feeling between them. But the next chapter

in young Sheridan's life shows Garrick in so benevolent a light that it is evident his animosity to the father, if it existed, had no influence on his conduct to the son. Garrick was now very near the close of his career: and when it was understood that he meant not only to retire from the stage, but to resign his connection with the theatre altogether, a great commotion arose in the theatrical world. These were the days of patents, when the two great theatres held a sort of monopoly, and were safe from all rivalship except that of each other. It was at the end of the year 1775 that Garrick's intention of "selling his moiety of the patent of Drury Lane Theatre" became known: and Richard Sheridan was then in the early flush of his success, crowding the rival theatre, and promising a great succession of brilliant work to come. But it could scarcely be supposed that a young man just emerging out of obscurity—rich, indeed, in his first gains, and no doubt seeing before him a great future, but yet absolutely destitute of capital—could have been audacious enough, without some special encouragement, to think of acquiring this great but precarious property, and launching himself upon such a venture. How he came to think of it we are left uninformed, but the first whisper of the chance seems to have inflamed his mind; and Garrick, whether or not he actually helped him with money, as some say, was at all events favourable to him from the beginning of the negotiations. He had promised that the refusal should first be offered to Colman; but when Colman, as he expected, declined, it was the penniless young dramatist whom of all competitors the old actor preferred. Sheridan had a certain amount of backing, though not

enough, as far as would appear, to lessen the extraordinary daring of the venture—his father-in-law, Linley, who it is to be supposed had in his long career laid up some money, taking part in the speculation along with a certain Dr. Ford: but both in subordination to the young man who had no money at all. Here are Sheridan's explanations of the matter addressed to his father-in-law:—

"According to his (Garrick's) demand, the whole is valued at £70,000. He appears very shy of letting his books be looked into as the test of the profits on this sum, but says it must be on its nature a purchase on speculation. However, he has promised me a rough estimate of his own of the entire receipts for the last seven years. But after all it must certainly be a purchase on speculation without money's worth having been made out. One point he solemnly avers, which is that he will never part with it under the price abovementioned. This is all I can say on the subject until Wednesday, though I can't help adding that I think we might safely give £5000 more on this purchase than richer people. The whole valued at £70,000, the annual interest is £3500; while this is cleared the proprietors are safe. But I think it must be infernal management indeed that does not double it."

A few days later the matter assumes a definite shape.

"Garrick was extremely explicit, and in short we came to a final resolution; so that if the necessary matters are made out to all our satisfactions, we may sign and seal a previous engagement within a fortnight.

"I meet him again to-morrow evening, when we are to name a day for a conveyancer on our side to meet his solicitor, Wallace. I have pitched on a Mr. Phipps, at the recommendation and by the advice of Dr. Ford. The three first steps to be taken are these,—our lawyer is to look into the titles, tenures, etc., of the house and adjoining estate, the extent and limitations of the patent, etc.; we shall then employ a builder (I think Mr. Collins) to survey the state and repair in which the whole premises are, to which Mr. G.

entirely consents ; Mr. G. will then give us a fair and attested estimate from his books of what the profits have been, at an average, for these last seven years. This he has shown me in rough, and, valuing the property at £70,000, the interest has exceeded ten per cent.

"We should after this certainly make an interest to get the king's promise that while the theatre is well conducted, etc., he will grant no patent for a third, though G. seems confident he never will. If there is any truth in professions and appearances, G. seems likely always to continue our friend and to give every assistance in his power.

"The method of our sharing the purchase, I should think, may be thus—Ewart to take £10,000, you £10,000, and I £10,000. Dr. Ford agrees with the greatest pleasure to embark the other £5000 ; and, if you do not choose to venture so much, will, I daresay, share it with you. Ewart is preparing his money, and I have a certainty of my part. We shall have a very useful ally in Dr. Ford, and my father offers his services on our own terms. We cannot unite Garrick to our interests too firmly ; and I am convinced his influence will bring Leasy to our terms, if he should be ill-advised enough to desire to interfere in what he is totally unqualified for."

Ewart was the ever-faithful friend to whose house in London Sheridan had taken Miss Linley, whose son had been his second in the affair with Captain Matthews,—a man upon whose support the Sheridan family could always rely. But the source from which young Richard himself got the money for his own share remains a mystery, of which no one has yet found the solution. "Not even to Mr. Linley," says Moore, "while entering into all other details, does he hint at the fountainhead from which the supply is to come," and he adds a few somewhat commonplace reflections as to the manner in which all Sheridan's successes had as yet been obtained.

"There was, indeed, something mysterious and miraculous about all his acquisitions, whether in love, in learning, in wit, or in wealth. How or when his stock of knowledge was laid in nobody knew: it was as much a matter of marvel to those who never saw him read as the mode of existence of the chameleon has been to those who fancied it never eat. His advances in the heart of his mistress were, as we have seen, equally trackless and inaudible, and his triumph was the first that even his rivals knew of his love. In like manner the productions of his wit took the world by surprise, being perfected in secret till ready for display, and then seeming to break from under the cloud of his indolence in full maturity of splendour. His financial resources had no less an air of magic about them: and the mode by which he conjured up at this time the money for his first purchase into the theatre remains, as far as I can learn, still a mystery."

These remarks are somewhat foolish, to say the least, since the mystery attending the sudden successes of a young man of genius is sufficiently explained as soon as his possession of that incommunicable quality has once been established: and the triumph of a brilliant youth whose fascinating talk and social attractions were one of the features of his age, over his commonplace rivals in the heart of a susceptible girl does not even require genius to explain it. But neither genius itself nor all the personal fascination in the world can, alas! produce when it is wanted, ten thousand pounds. The anonymous author of *Sheridan and His Times* asserts confidently that Garrick himself advanced the money, having conceived a great friendship for Sheridan, and formed a strong opinion as to his capacity to increase the reputation and success of the theatre. Of this statement, however, no proof is offered, and Moore evidently gives no credence to such a suggestion, though he notices

that it had been made. The money was procured by some friendly help, no doubt. There were, as has been said, only the two great theatres in these days, none of the later crop having as yet sprung up, and each being under the protection of a patent; the speculation therefore was not so hazardous as it has proved to be since. It is, however, besides the mystery about the money, a most curious transformation to see the young idler, lover, and man of pleasure, suddenly placed at the head of such an undertaking, with so much responsibility upon his shoulders, and—accustomed only to the shiftless and hand-to-mouth living of extravagant poverty—become at once the administrator of a considerable revenue, and the head of a little community dependent upon him. He had done nothing all his life except, in a fit of inspiration of very recent date, produce a couple of plays. But it does not seem that any doubt of his powers crossed his mind or that of any of his associates. "Do not flag when we come to the point," he says to his father-in-law; "I'll answer for it we shall see many golden campaigns."

The stir and quickening of new energy is apparent in all he writes. The circumstances were such as might well quicken the steadiest pulse, for not only was he likely to lay a foundation of fortune for himself (and his first child had lately been born,—"a very magnificent fellow!"), but his nearest connections on both sides were involved, and likely to owe additional comfort and importance to the young prodigal whose own father had disowned him, and his wife's received him with the greatest reluctance,—a reflection which could not but be sweet. With such hopes in his mind the

sobriety and composure with which he writes are astonishing.

"Leasy is utterly unequal to any department in the theatre. He has an opinion of me, and is very willing to let the whole burden and ostensibility be taken off his shoulders. But I certainly should not give up my time and labour (for his superior advantage, having so much greater a share) without some conclusive advantage. Yet I should by no means make the demand till I had shown myself equal to the task. My father purposes to be with us but one year: and that only to give us what advantage he can from his experience. He certainly must be paid for his trouble, and so certainly must you. You have experience and character equal to the line you would undertake, and it never can enter into anybody's head that you were to give your time, or any part of your attention, gratis because you had a share in the theatre. I have spoken on the subject both to Garrick and Leasy, and you will find no demur on any side to your gaining a *certain* income from the theatre, greater I think than you could make out of it, and in this the theatre would be acting only for its own advantage."

The other shareholder who held the half of the property—while Sheridan, Linley, and Ford divided the other half between them—was a Mr. Lacy: and there seems a charming possibility of some reminiscence of the brogue, though Sheridan probably had never been touched by it in his own person, having left Ireland as a child—in the mis-spelling of the name. It is impossible not to sympathise with him in the delightful consciousness of having proved the futility of all objections, and become the aid and hope, instead of the detriment and burden, of both families, which must have sweetened his own brilliant prospects. His father evidently was now fully reconciled and sympathetic, proud of his son, and disposed (though not without a consideration) to give him

the benefit of his experience and advice; and Linley was to have the chance of an income from the theatre "greater than he could make out of it." With what sweet moisture the eyes of the silenced Diva at home, the St. Cecilia whose mouth her young husband's adoring pride had stopped, must have glistened to think that her father, who had done all he could to keep her Sheridan at arm's length, was now to have his fortune made by that injured and unappreciated hero! She had other causes for happiness and glory. "Your grandson," Sheridan adds in the same letter to Linley, "astonishes everybody by his vivacity, his talents for music and poetry, and the most perfect integrity of mind." Everything was now brilliant and hopeful about the young pair. The only drawback was the uneasiness of Sheridan's position until the business should be finally settled, between the two theatres. "My confidential connection with the other house," he says, "is peculiarly distressing till I can with prudence reveal my situation, and such a treaty, however prudently managed, cannot long be kept secret."

The matter was settled early in the year 1776, Sheridan being then twenty-five. Before the end of the year troubles arose with Lacy, and it would seem that Sheridan took the strong step of retiring from the managership and carrying the actors along with him, leaving the other perplexed and feeble proprietor to do the best he could with such materials as he could pick up. All quarrels, however, were soon made up, and affairs proceeded amicably for some time: but Sheridan eventually bought Lacy out at a further expenditure of £45,000, partly obtained, it would appear, from Gar-

rick, partly by other means. The narrative is not very clear, nor is it very important to know what squabbles might convulse the theatre, or how the friends of Lacy might characterise the "conceited young man," who showed no inclination to consult a colleague of so different a calibre from himself. But it seems to be agreed on all sides that the beginning of Sheridan's reign at Drury was not very prosperous. Though he had shown so much energy in his financial arrangements at the beginning, it was not easy to get over the habits of all his previous life, and work with the steadiness and regularity of a man of business, as was needful. There was an interval of dulness which did not carry out the hopes very naturally formed when the young dramatist who had twice filled the rival theatre with eager crowds and applauses came to the head of affairs. Garrick, who had so long been its chief attraction, was gone; and it was a new group of actors unfamiliar to him with whom the new manager had to do. He remodelled for them a play of Vanburgh's, which he called a *Trip to Scarborough*, but which, notwithstanding all he did to it, remained still the production of an earlier age, wanting in the refinement and comparative purity which Sheridan himself had already done so much to make popular. The Miss Hoyden, the rustic lady whom Lord Foppington is destined to marry, but does not, is a creature of the species of Tony Lumpkin, though infinitely less clever and shrewd than that delightful lout, and has no sort of kindred with the pretty gentlewoman of Sheridan's natural period. And the public were not specially attracted by this *réchauffé*. In fact, after all the excitement and wonderful novelty of this astonishing launch

into life, the reaction was great and discouraging. Old stock pieces of a repertory of which Garrick had been the soul,—new contrivances of pantomime "expected to draw all the human race to Drury," and which were rendered absolutely necessary "on account of a marvellous preparation of the kind which is making at Covent Garden,"—must have fallen rather flat both upon the mind of the manager, still new and inexperienced in his office, and of the public, which no doubt at the hands of the author of the *Rivals*, and with the songs of the *Duenna* still tingling in its ears, expected great things. But this pause was only the *reculer pour mieux sauter* which precedes a great effort; for early in the next year Sheridan rose to the full height of his genius, and the *School for Scandal* blazed forth, a great Jupiter among the minor starlights of the drama, throwing the rival house and all its preparations altogether into the shade.

CHAPTER III.

THE "SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

It was clear that a great effort was required for the advantage of Drury Lane, to make up for the blow of Garrick's withdrawal, and to justify the hopes founded upon the new management; and Mr. Lacy and the public had both reason to wonder that the head which had filled Covent Garden from pit to gallery should do nothing for the house in which all his hopes of fortune were involved. No doubt the cares of management and administration were heavy, and the previous training of Sheridan had not been such as to qualify him for continuous labour of any kind; but at the same time it was not unnatural that his partners in the undertaking should have grumbled at the long interval which elapsed before he entered the lists in his own person. It was May 1777, more than a year after his entry upon the proprietorship of Drury Lane, when the *School for Scandal* was produced, and then it was hurried into the hands of the performers piecemeal before it was finished, the last act finding its way to the theatre five days before the final production. The manuscript, Moore informs us, was issued forth in shreds and patches, there being but "one rough draft of the last

five scenes scribbled upon detached pieces of paper: while of all the preceding acts there are numerous transcripts scattered promiscuously through six or seven books, with new interlineations and memoranda to each. On the last leaf of all, which exists, just as we may suppose it to have been despatched by him to the copyist," Moore adds, "there is the following curious specimen of a doxology, written hastily in the handwriting of the respective parties, at the bottom :—

'Finished at last; thank God!

'R. B. SHERIDAN.

'Amen!

'W. HAWKINS.'"

The bearer of the latter name was the prompter, and there is a whole history of hurry and anxiety and confusion, a company disorganised, and an unhappy functionary at the end of his powers, in this devout exclamation. It is bad enough to keep the press waiting, but a dozen or so of actors arrested in their study, and the whole business of the theatre depending upon the time at which a man of fashion got home from an entertainment, or saw his guests depart in the grey of the morning, is chaos indeed. "We have heard him say," writes a gossiping commentator, "that he had in those early days stolen from his bed at sunrise to prosecute his literary labours, or after midnight, when his visitors had departed, flown to his desk, and, at the cost of a bottle of port, sat down to resume the work which the previous morning in its early rising had dawned upon." The highly polished diction of the *School for Scandal*, and the

high pressure of its keen and trenchant wit, does not look much like the excited work of the small hours inspired by port; but a man who is fully launched in the tide of society, and sought on all hands to give brilliancy to the parties of his patrons, must needs "steal a few hours from the night." "It was the fate of Sheridan through life," Moore says, "and in a great degree his policy, to gain credit for excessive indolence and carelessness." It seems very likely that he has here hit the mark, and furnished an explanation for many of the apparently headlong feats of composition by which many authors are believed to have distinguished themselves. There is no policy which tells better. It is not merely an excuse for minor faults, but an extraordinary enhancement in the eyes of the uninstructed, of merit of all kinds. To be able to dash off in a moment, at a sitting, what would take the laborious plodder a week's work, is a kind of triumph which is delightful both to the performer and spectator; and many besides Sheridan have found it a matter of policy to keep up such a character. The anonymous biographer whom we have already quoted is very angry with Moore for attempting to show that Sheridan did not dash off his best work in this reckless way, but studied every combination, and sharpened his sword by repeated trials of its edge and temper. The scientific critic has always scorned what the multitude admire, and the fashion of our own age has so far changed that to show an elaborate process of workmanship for any piece of literary production, and if possible to trace its lineage to previous works and well-defined impulses and influences, is now the favourite object of the biographer and commentator. We confess a leaning to the primitive

method, and a preference for the Minerva springing full armed from the brain of Jove to the goddesses more gradually developed of scientific investigation.

But Moore's account of the growth of Sheridan's powers, and of the steps by which he ascended to the mastery of his art, are interesting and instructive. The *Rivals* sprang into being without much thought, with that instinctive and unerring perception of the right points to recollect and record, which makes observation the unconscious instrument of genius, and is so immensely and indescribably different from mere imitation. But the *School for Scandal*—a more elaborate performance in every way—required a different handling. It seems to have floated in the writer's mind from the moment when he discovered his own powers, stimulating his invention and his memory at once, and prompting half-a-dozen beginnings before the right path was discovered. Now it is one story, now another, that attracts his fancy. He will enlist those gossiping circles which he feels by instinct to be so serviceable for the stage, to serve the purpose of a scheming woman and separate a pair of lovers. Anon, departing from that idea, he will employ them to bring about the catastrophe of a loveless marriage, in which an old husband and a young wife, the very commonplaces of comedy, shall take a new and original development. Two distinct stories rise in his mind like two butterflies circling about each other, keeping him for a long time undecided which is the best for his purpose. The first plot is one which the spectator has now a little difficulty in tracing through the brilliant scenes which were originally intended to carry it out, though it is distinctly stated in the first scene between

Lady Sneerwell and Snake which still opens the comedy. As it now stands this intimation of her ladyship's purpose is far too important for anything that follows, and is apt to mystify the spectator, who finds little in the after scenes to justify it—a confusion at once explained when we are made aware that this was the original *motif* of the entire piece, the object of which was to separate, not Charles Surface, but a sentimental hero called Clarimont, Florival, and other pastoral names, from the Maria whom he loves, and who is the ward, niece, or even step-daughter of Lady Sneerwell, a beautiful widow and leader of scandal, who loves him. But while the author is playing with this plot, and designing fragmentary scenes in which to carry it out, the other is tugging at his fancy—an entirely distinct idea, with a group of new and individual characters, the old man and his wife, the two contrasted brothers, one of whom is to have the reputation of being her lover, while the other is the real villain. At first there is no connection whatever between the two. The *School for Scandal* proper is first tried. Here would seem to be the first suggestions of it, no doubt noted down at a venture for future use without any very definite intention, perhaps after a morning's stroll through the crowd which surrounded the waters of the Bath with so many bitternesses. There are here, the reader will perceive, no indications of character, or even names, to serve as symbols for the Crabtrees and Candours to come.

"The Slanderer. *A Pump-Room Scene.*

Friendly caution to the newspapers.
It is whispered——

She is a constant attendant at church, and very frequently takes Dr. M'Brawn home with her.

Mr. Worthy is very good to the girl:—for my part I dare swear he has no ill intention.

What! Major Wesley's Miss Montague?

Lud, ma'am, the match is certainly broke. No creature knows the cause: some say a flaw in the lady's character, and others in the gentleman's fortune.

To be sure they do say——

I hate to repeat what I hear——

She was inclined to be a little too plump before they went——

The most intrepid blush. I've known her complexion stand fire for an hour together."

Whether these jottings suggested the design, or were merely seized upon by that faculty of appropriating "son bien ou il le trouve," which is one of the privileges of genius, it is impossible to tell; but it will be seen that the germ of all the highly-wrought and polished scenes of the scandalous college is in them. The first use to which they were put is soon visible in the scene between Lady Sneerwell and Snake (called Spatter in the original) which opened the uncompleted play, and still stands, though with much less significance, at the beginning of the actual one. In this sketch Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite appear as parties to the intrigue, the latter being the lover of Maria, and intended to embroil her with Clarimont, who is no gallant rake like his prototype in the existing drama, but a piece of perfection highly superior to the gossip,—"one of your moral fellows . . . who has too much good nature to say a witty thing himself, and is too ill-natured to permit it in others," and who is as dull as virtue of this abstract type is usually represented on the stage. To show the difference in the

workmanship, we may quote the only portion of the old sketch, which is identical in meaning with the perfected one. Lady Sneerwell and Spatter are, as in the first version, "discovered" when the curtain rises.

"*Lady S.* The paragraphs, you say, were all inserted?

Spat. They were, madam.

Lady S. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

Spat. Madam, by this time Lady Brittle is the talk of half the town: and in a week will be treated as a demirep.

Lady S. What have you done as to the innuendo of Miss Nicely's fondness for her own footman?

Spat. 'Tis in a fair train, ma'am. I told it to my hairdresser; he courts a milliner's girl in Pall Mall, whose mistress has a first cousin who is waiting-woman to Lady Clackit. I think in about fourteen hours it must reach Lady Clackit, and then you know the business is done.

Lady S. But is that sufficient, do you think?

Spat. Oh, Lud, ma'am! I'll undertake to ruin the character of the primmest prude in London with half as much. Ha, ha! Did your ladyship never hear how poor Miss Shepherd lost her lover and her character last summer at Scarborough?—this was the whole of it. One evening at Lady ——'s the conversation happened to turn on the difficulty of feeding Nova Scotia sheep in England——"

The reader will recollect the story about the sheep, which is produced at a later period in the scene, under a different name in the actual version, as are Miss Nicely and her footman. To show, however, the improvement of the artist's taste, we will place beside the less perfect essay we have just quoted the scene as it stands.

"*Lady Sneer.* The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

Snake. They were, madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

Lady Sneer. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

Snake. That's in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackitt's ears within four-and-twenty hours, and then you know the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneer. Why, truly Mrs. Clackitt has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of industry.

Snake. True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons disinherited. . . . Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tête-à-tête* in *The Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties perhaps had never seen each other before in the course of their lives.

Lady Sneer. She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

Snake. 'Tis very true. She generally designs well, has a free tongue, and a bold invention; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of tint and mellowness of sneer which distinguish your ladyship's scandal.

Lady Sneer. You are partial, Snake.

Snake. Not in the least; everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word and a look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it."

It seems needless to reproduce the dull and artificial scenes which Moore quotes by way of showing how Sheridan floundered through the mud of commonplace before he found firm footing on the ground where he achieved so brilliant a success. They are like an artist's first experiments in design, and instructive only in that sense. Perhaps it was in the despair which is apt to seize the imagination when a young writer finds his performance so inadequate to express his idea, that Sheridan threw the whole machinery of the scandalous circle aside, and

betook himself to the construction of the other drama which had got into his brain—the story of old Teazle and his young wife, and of the brothers Plausible or Pliant, or half a dozen names beside, as the fancy of their author varies. In the first sketch, our friend Sir Peter, that caustic and polished gentleman, is Solomon Teazle, a retired tradesman, who maunders over Margery his first wife, and his own folly, after getting rid of her in encumbering himself with another: but after a very brief interval, this beginning, altogether unsuitable to the writer's tastes and capabilities, changes insensibly into the more harmonious conception of the old husband as we know him. The shopkeeper was not in Sheridan's way. Such a *hobereau* as Bob Acres, with his apings of fashion, might come within his limited range; but it did not extend to those classes which lie outside of society. Trip and Fag and their fellows were strictly within this circle; they are as witty as their masters in the hands of the dramatist, and rather more fine, as is the nature of a gentleman's gentleman; and even royalty itself must be content to share the stage with these indispensable ministers and copyists. But the world beyond was at all times a sealed book to this historian of fashionable folly—and he was wisely inspired in throwing over the plebeian. He seems very speedily to have found out his mistake, for nothing more is heard of Solomon; and in the next fragmentary scene the dramatist glides at once into a discussion of Lady Teazle's extravagances, in which we have a great deal of unmeaning detail, all cleared away like magic in the existing scene, which is framed upon it, yet is as much superior to it as a lively and amusing altercation can be

to the items of a lengthy account interspersed with mutual recriminations. It would appear, however, that the Teazle play was subsequent to the Sneerwell one, for there is a great deal of pointed and brilliant writing, and much that is retained almost without change, in the first adumbrations of the great scenes with Joseph Surface. "So then," says Lady Teazle in this early sketch, "you would have me sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation," an epigrammatic phrase which is retained without alteration in the final scene. Moore tells us that this sentence is "written in every direction, and without any material change in its form, over the pages of his different memorandum books." It is evident that it had caught Sheridan's fancy, and that he had favourite phrases as some people have favourite children, produced on every possible occasion and always delighted in.

How it was that Sheridan was led to amalgamate these two plays into one, we are left altogether without information. Moore's knowledge seems to have been drawn entirely from the papers put into his hands, which probably no one then living knew much about, belonging as they did to the early career of a man who had lived to be old, and abandoned altogether the walk of literature, in which he had won his early laurels. He surmises that the two-act comedy which Sheridan tells Linley is about to be put in rehearsal may have been the Teazle play: but this is mere conjecture, and we can only suppose that Sheridan had found, as he grew better acquainted with the requirements of the stage, that neither of the plots he had sketched out was enough to keep the interest of the audience; and that in the

necessity that pressed upon him for something to fill the stage and stop the mouths of his new company and associates, he threw the two plots together by a sudden inspiration, knitting the one to the other by the dazzling links of those scandalous scenes which, to tell the truth, have very little to do with either. Whether he transferred these bodily from an already polished and completed sketch, working them into the materials needed for his double intrigue with as little alteration of the original fabric as possible, or if in his haste and confidence of success he deliberately refrained from connecting them with the action of the piece, we have no way of telling. The daring indifference which he shows to that supposed infallible rule of dramatic composition which ordains that every word of the dialogue should help on the action, is edifying, and shows how entirely independent of rule is success. At the same time it strikes us as curious that Sheridan did not find it expedient to employ the evil tongues a little more upon the group of people whose fortunes are the immediate subject of the comedy. For instance, there is no warrant whatever in the play for the suspicion of Charles Surface which Sir Peter expresses at an exciting moment. A hint of his character and impending troubles is indeed given us, but nothing that can in the least link his name with that of Lady Teazle—which seems a distinct inadvertence on the part of the dramatist, since there might have been an admirable opportunity for piquing our curiosity by a *séance* of the scandalmongers upon the possible relations between those two gay prodigals.

The scandalous scenes, however (save the last of them), are almost entirely without connection with the

plot. They can be detached and enjoyed separately without any sensible loss in the reader's (or even spectator's) mind. In themselves the management of all the details is inimitable. The eager interchange takes away our breath; there is no break or possibility of pause in it. The malign suggestion, the candid astonishment, the spite which assails, and the malicious good-nature which excuses, are all balanced to perfection, with a spirit which never flags for a moment. And when the veterans in the art are joined by a brilliant and mischievous recruit in the shape of Lady Teazle, rushing in among them in pure *gaieté du cœur*, the energy of her young onslaught outdoes them all. The talk has never been so brilliant, never so pitiless, as when she joins them. She adds the gift of mimicry to all their malice, and produces a genuine laugh even from those murderers of their neighbours' reputations. This is one of the side-lights, perhaps unintentional, which keen insight throws upon human nature, showing how mere headlong imitation and high spirits, and the determination to do whatever other people do, and a little more, go further than the most mischievous intention. Perhaps the author falls into his usual fault of giving too much wit and point to the utterances of the young wife, who is not intended to be clever; but her sudden dash into the midst of the dowagers, and unexpected victory over them in their own line, is full of nature. "Very well, Lady Teazle, I see you can be a little severe," said Lady Sneerwell, expressing the astonishment of the party; while Mrs. Candour hastens to welcome Sir Peter on his arrival with her habitual complaint that "they have been so censorious—and Lady

Teazle as bad as any one." The slanderers themselves are taken by surprise, and the indignation and horror of the husband know no bounds. There is no more successful touch in the whole composition.

Apart from these scenes, the construction of the play shows once more Sheridan's astonishing instinct for a striking situation. Two such will immediately occur to the mind of the reader, the great Screen scene, and that in which Charles Surface sells his family portraits. The first is incomparably the greater of the two, and one which has rarely been equalled on the stage. The succession of interviews, one after another, has not a word too much; nor could the most impatient audience find any sameness or repetition in the successive arrivals, each one of which adds an embarrassment to the dilemma of Joseph Surface, and helps to clear up those of his victims. As the imbroglio grows before our eyes, and every door of escape for the hypocrite is shut up, without even the common sentimental error of awakening commiseration for him, the most matter-of-fact spectator can scarcely repress, even when carried along by the interest of the story, a sensation of admiring wonder at the skill with which all these combinations are effected. It is less tragic than Tartuffe, insomuch as Orgon's profound belief, and the darker guilt of the domestic traitor, move us more deeply; and it is not terrible like the unveiling of Iago; but neither is it trivial, as the ordinary discoveries of deceitful wives and friends to which we are accustomed on the stage so generally are; and the fine art with which Sir Peter, something of an old curmudgeon in the earlier scenes, is made unexpectedly to reveal his better nature, and thus prepare the way, un-

awares, for the re-establishment of his own happiness at the moment when it seems entirely shattered, is worthy of the highest praise. It would no doubt have been higher art could the dramatist have deceived his audience as well as the personages of the play, and made us also parties in the surprise of the discovery. But this is what no one has as yet attempted, not even Shakespeare, and we have no right to object to Sheridan that we are in the secret of Joseph's baseness all the time, just as we are in the secret of Tartuffe's, and can with difficulty understand how it is that he deceives any one. There remains for the comedy of the future (or the tragedy, which, wherever the deeper chords of life are touched, comes to very much the same thing) a still greater achievement—that of inventing an Iago who shall deceive the audience as well as the Othello upon whom he plays, and be found out only by us and our hero at the same moment. Probably, could such a thing be done, the effect would be too great, and the indignation and horror of the crowd, thus skilfully excited, produce a sensation beyond that which is permissible to fiction. But Sheridan does not deal with any tragical powers. Nothing deeper is within his reach than the momentary touch of real feeling with which Lady Teazle vindicates herself, and proves her capacity for better things. The gradual development of the situation, the unwilling agency of the deceiver in opening the eyes and touching the heart of the woman he hopes to seduce, and clearing the character of the brother whom he desires to incriminate; the confusion of his mind as one after another so many dangerous elements come together; the chuckling malice of the old man, eager, half to exonerate Joseph from the charge

of austerity, half to betray his secret, little suspecting how nearly his own credit is involved; the stupefying dismay of the disclosure;—are managed with the most complete success. The scene is in itself a succinct drama quite comprehensible even when detached from its context, and of the highest effectiveness. So far as morals are concerned, it is as harmless as any equivocal situation can be. To be sure the suggestion of the little milliner is no more savoury than the presence of Lady Teazle is becoming to her reputation and duty; but the utter confusion of the scheme, and the admirable and unexpected turn given to the conclusion by her genuine perception of her folly and her husband's merit, go as far as is possible to neutralise all that is amiss in it. There had been a temporary doubt as to whether the *Rivals* would catch the public fancy: there was none at all about this.

The other great scene, that in which Charles Surface sells his pictures, has qualities of a different kind. It is less perfect and more suggestive than most of Sheridan's work. We have to accept the favourite type of the stage hero—the reckless, thoughtless, warmhearted, impressionable spendthrift, as willing to give as he is averse to pay, scattering his wild oats by handfuls, wasting his life and his means in riotous living, yet easily touched and full of kind impulses—before we can do justice to it. This character, whatever moralists may say, always has, and probably always will retain a favoured place in fiction. Though we know very well that in real life dissipation does not keep the heart soft or promote gratitude and other generous sentiments, yet we are still willing to believe that the riotous youth whose animal spirits carry him away into devious paths is at bottom better than the

demure one who keeps his peccadilloes out of sight of the world. The eighteenth century had no doubt on the subject. Charles Surface is the lighthearted prodigal whose easy vices have brought him to the point of destruction. Whatever grave thoughts on the subject he may have within, he is resolute in carrying out his gay career to the end, and ready to laugh in the face of ruin. A more severe taste might consider his light-heartedness swagger, and his generosity prodigality; but we are expected on the stage to consider such characteristics as far more frequently conjoined with a good heart than sobriety and decency. The reckless young reprobate at the lowest ebb of his fortune, ready to throw away anything or everything, and exposing himself hopelessly and all his follies to the rich uncle who has come to test him, conciliates our good opinion from the beginning by the real kindness with which he protects "little Premium," the supposed money-lender, from the rude pleasantries of his boon companions. The touch of desperation which is in his gaiety without ever finding expression in words enhances the effect of his headlong talk and wild wit. When his companion Careless, to whom it is all a good joke, complains—"Charles, I haven't a hammer; and what's an auctioneer without a hammer?" the master of the ruined house clutches with a laugh at the family pedigree, firmly and tightly encircling its roller, and throws that to him: "Here, Careless, you shall have no common bit of mahogany; here's the family tree for you, and you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree," he cries. Such a laugh raises echoes which we wonder whether Sheridan contemplated or had

any thought of. As the prodigal rattles on with almost too much swing and "way" upon him in the tragi-comedy of fate, we are hurried along in the stream of his wild gaiety with sympathy which he has no right to. The audience is all on his side from the first word. Sir Oliver is a weakheaded old gentleman, not at all equal to Sir Peter, and is overcome with ludicrous ease and rapidity; but the obstinacy of affectionate gratitude with which the hot-headed young fellow holds by the portrait of his benefactor, and the fine superiority with which he puts all "little Premium's" overtures aside, without putting on any newborn virtue or pretensions to amendment, are in their way a masterpiece. He pretends no admiration for the distant uncle, but speaks of him as freely as of the other sacrificed ancestors. "The little ill-looking fellow over the settee" evokes no sentiment from him. He is quite willing to draw a post-obit upon Sir Oliver's life, and to jest at him as a little nabob with next to no liver. But for all that, a sort of impudent fidelity, a reckless gratitude, is in the ruined prodigal. The equally reckless but more composed friend, who is ready to abet him in all his folly with the indifference of an unconcerned bystander, the wondering contempt of the Jew, the concealed and somewhat maudlin emotion of the once indignant uncle, surround the figure of the swaggering gallant with the most felicitous background. It is far less elaborate and complicated than the companion scene; but it is scarcely less successful.

It is a curious particular in the excellence of the piece, however, and scarcely a commendation, we fear, in the point of view of art, that these very striking scenes, as well as those in which the scandalmongers hold their

amusing conclave, may all be detached from the setting with the greatest ease and without any perceptible loss of interest. Never was there a drama which it was so easy to take to pieces. The screen scene in itself forms, as we have already pointed out, a succinct and brilliant little performance which the simplest audience could understand; and though the others might require a word or two of preface, they are each sufficiently perfect in themselves to admit of separation from the context. It says a great deal for the power of the writer that this should be consistent with the general interest of the comedy, and that we are scarcely conscious in the acting, of the looseness with which it hangs together, or the independence of the different parts. Sheridan, who was not a playwright by science but rather by accident, did not in all likelihood, in the exuberance of his youthful strength, trouble himself with any study of the laws that regulate dramatic composition. The unities of time and place he preserves, indeed, because it suits him to do so; the incidents of his pieces might all happen in a few hours for anything we know, and with singularly little change of scene; but the close composition and interweaving of one part with another, which all dramatists ought, but so very few do, study, evidently cost him little thought. He has the quickest eye for a situation, and knows that nothing pleases the playgoing public so much as a strong combination and climax; but he does not take the trouble to rivet the links of his chain or fit them very closely into each other. It is a wonderful tribute to his power that, notwithstanding this looseness of construction, few people object to allow to the *School for Scandal* the pre-

eminence accorded to it by admiring contemporaries as being the best modern English comedy. There is more nature and more story in *She Stoops to Conquer;* but nothing so brilliant, so incisive, no such concentration of all the forces of Art, and nothing like the sparkle of the dialogue, the polish and ease of diction. Goldsmith's play, though produced only three or four years before, is a generation older in atmosphere and sentiment; but it is the only one which has proved a competitor with Sheridan's great comedy, or that we can compare with it. To go back to Shakespeare and place these brilliant studies of Society in the eighteenth century by the side of that radiant world of imagination which took refuge in the woods of Arden, or found a place in the enchanted island, would be futile indeed. It would be little less foolish than to compare Sheridan's prologues and occasional verses with the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. Not to that region or near it did he ever reach. It was not his to sound the depths of human thought or mount to any height of fancy. Rosalind and Prospero were out of his reckoning altogether; but for a lively observation of what was going on upon the surface of life, with an occasional step a little way—but only a little way—beyond: and a fine instinct for that concentration of incident and interest which make a striking dramatic scene, nobody has excelled him, and very few indeed reach anything like the level of his power.

This play, which the actors had begun to rehearse before it was all written, was received by everybody connected with the theatre with excitement and applause. Garrick himself, it is said, attended the rehearsals, and "was never known on any former occasion to be more anxious

for a favourite piece." The old actor threw himself with generous warmth into the interest of the new dramatist, upon whom for the moment the glory of Drury Lane depended. Moore quotes a note from him which proves the active interest he took in the production of the new play. "A gentleman who is as mad as myself about y^e^ *School*," he writes, "remarked that the characters upon y^e^ stage at y^e^ falling of y^e^ screen stand too long before they speak. I thought so too y^e^ first night: he said it was y^e^ same on y^e^ 2nd and was remark'd by others: tho' they should be astonish'd and a little petrify'd, yet it may be carry'd to too great a length." His affectionate interest is still further proved by the Prologue, in which he speaks of Sheridan with a sort of paternal admiration.

"Is our young bard so young to think that he
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?
Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil's sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging:
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles, once lavishly bestowed,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks the hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a caballero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for you."

It is a ludicrous circumstance in the history that an attempt was made after Sheridan's death, and by no less strange a hand than that of his first biographer, Watkins, to question the authorship of the *School for Scandal*, which, according to this absurd story, was the composi-

tion of an anonymous young lady, who sent it to the management of Drury Lane shortly before her death, an event of which Sheridan took advantage to produce her work as his own! That any reasonable creature could be found to give vent to such a ridiculous fiction, is an evidence of human folly and malignity more remarkable than any in the play, and laughably appropriate as connected with it, as if Sir Benjamin Backbite had risen from the grave to avenge himself.

It is needless to add that the popularity which has never failed for more than a century attended the first production of the great comedy. It brought back prosperity with a bound to the theatre, which had been struggling in vain under Sheridan's management against, so to speak, Sheridan himself at Covent Garden in the shape of the *Rivals* and *Duenna*. Two years after its first production it is noted in the books of the theatre that "the *School for Scandal* damped the new pieces." Nothing could stand against it, and the account of the nightly receipts shows with what steadiness it continued to fill the treasury, which had been sinking to a lower and lower ebb.

Many attempts were made at the time, and have been made since, to show how and from whom Sheridan derived his ideas: a more justifiable appropriation than that of the play entire, though perhaps a still more disagreeable imputation, since many who would not give credit to the suggestion of a literary crime and wholesale robbery would not hesitate to believe the lesser accusation. Plagiarism is vile and everywhere to be condemned; but it is an easy exercise of the critical faculty, and one in which, in all generations, some of the smaller professors of the craft find a congenial field of labour,

to ferret out resemblances in imaginative compositions, which are as natural as the resemblances between members of the same race, were it not for the invidious suggestion that the one is a theft from the other. It would be nearly as reasonable to say that the family air and features of a noble house were stolen from the ancestors of the same. It is suggested accordingly that Joseph and Charles Surface came from *Tom Jones* and *Blifil;* that Mrs. Malaprop was perhaps Mrs. Slip-slop or perhaps a sort of hash of Miss Tabitha Bramble and her waiting maid; and even that the amusing meetings of the *School for Scandal* were a reflection from the *Misanthrope.* There will always be some who will take a pleasure in depreciating the originality of an author in this way; but it is scarcely necessary, now that Sheridan himself has become a classic, to take any trouble in pointing out the pettiness of such criticism so far as he is concerned. Like Molière, he took his own where he found it, with an inalienable right to do so which no reasonable and competent literary tribunal would ever deny. The process by which one idea strikes fire upon another and helps to hand the light of imagination along the line, is a natural and noble one, honourable to every mind which has to do with it, and as unlike the baseness of literary robbery or imitation as any natural growth and evolution can be. It is, indeed, one of the finest offices of the poet to awaken smouldering thoughts in other intelligences, and strike off into the darkness as many varied scintillations of kindred light as the race can produce. A curious instance of the ease with which accusations of this sort are made, as well as of how a small slander

will extend and spread, is to be found, of all places in the world, in the record made by Samuel Rogers of the conversations of Charles James Fox. Sheridan, among other appropriations, had been supposed to take the idea of Sir Oliver's return from his own mother's novel of *Sidney Biddulph*. He might for that matter have taken it from a hundred novels, since no incident was more hackneyed. "Thought *Sidney Biddulph* one of the best novels of the age," Rogers reports Fox to have said; "Sheridan denied having read it, though the plot of his *School for Scandal* was borrowed from it." Sir Peter Teazle's ball, which, after missing Charles Surface, "struck against a little bronze Shakespeare that stood over the fireplace, glanced out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire," was scarcely a more successful example of the amplification of report than this. It is not to be supposed that Fox meant any harm to his friend and sometime colleague; but the expansion of the original statement that the idea of the Indian uncle's return came from this source, to the bold assertion that the plot of the *School for Scandal* was borrowed from it, is worthy of Lady Sneerwell herself.

The play was not published in any authorised edition during Sheridan's lifetime, probably because it was more to his profit, according to theatrical regulations, that it should not be so—though Sheridan's grand statement that he had been "nineteen years endeavouring to satisfy himself with the style of the *School for Scandal*, and had not succeeded," may be taken as the reason if the reader chooses. He was sufficiently dilatory and fastidious to

have made that possible. It was, however, printed in Dublin (which was the great seat of literary piracy before the Union, when it shifted farther west), from a copy which Sheridan had sent to his sister, Mrs. Lefanu, "to be disposed of for her own advantage to the manager of the Dublin theatre." Almost immediately after its production several of the scenes were "adapted" and acted in France; and it has since been printed not only in innumerable editions in England, but translated into every European language. Nor is there, we may say, any new play, unattended by special stimulation of adventitious interest, which is still so certain of securing "a good house."

In the same year in which this masterpiece came into being, and moved by the same necessities, Sheridan produced the last of his dramatic compositions,—a work which has perhaps occasioned more innocent amusement and cordial laughter than any other of the kind in the language, and has furnished us with more allusions and illustrations than anything else out of Shakespeare. The *Critic* is, of all Sheridan's plays, the one which has least claim to originality. Although it is no copy, nor can be accused of plagiarism, it is the climax of a series of attempts descending downwards from the Elizabethan era, when the *Knight of the Burning Pestle* was performed amid the running commentaries of the homely critics: and it could scarcely have died out of the recollection of Sheridan's audience that Fielding had over and over again made the same attempt in the previous generation. But what his predecessors had tried with different degrees of success—or failure—Sheridan accomplished triumphantly. The humours of the Rehearsal, still sufficiently novel to

himself to retain all their whimsical originality, he alone had the power so to set upon the stage that all that is ludicrous in dramatic representation is brought before us —but with so much dramatic success that the criticism becomes only a more subtle kind of applause, and in the act of making the theatre ridiculous, he makes it doubly attractive. This amusing paradox is carried out with the utmost skill and boldness. In the *School for Scandal* Sheridan had held his audience in delighted suspense in scene after scene which had merely the faintest link of connection with the plot of his play, and did little more than interrupt its action. But in the new work he held the stage for nearly half the progress of the piece by the mere power of pointed and pungent remarks, the keen interchanges of witty talk, the personality of three or four individuals not sufficiently developed to be considered as impersonations of character, and with nothing to do but to deliver their comments upon matters of literary interest. Rarely has a greater feat been performed on the stage. We are told that Sir Fretful Plagiary was intended for Cumberland, that Dangle meant somebody else, and that this it was that gave the chief interest to the first portion of the play. But what did the multitude care about Cumberland? Should it occur to any clever playwright of our day to produce upon the stage a caricature of one of our poets—we humbly thank heaven much greater personages than Cumberland — a cultivated audience for the first two or three nights might enjoy the travesty. But London, on the whole, when it had once gazed at the imitated great man, would turn away without an attempt to suppress the yawn which displayed its indifference. No popular audience

anywhere would be moved by such an expedient,—and only a popular audience can secure the success of a play. It was not Cumberland: it was not the theatrical enthusiast represented by Dangle. Nothing can be more evanescent than successes produced by such means. And this was a vigorous and healthy success, not an affair of the coteries. It is all the more astonishing because the play on words is somewhat elaborate, the speeches in many cases long-winded, and the subjects discussed of no general human interest. Indeed, Mr. Puff's elaborate description of puffing, when subjected to the test of reading, is, it must be confessed, a little tedious: which is, of all the sins of the stage, the most unpardonable. Supposing any young dramatist of the present day to carry such a piece to a stage manager, we can imagine the consternation with which his proposal would be received. What! take up the time of the public with a discussion of literary squabbles, and the passion of an irate author attacked by the press!—expect the world to be amused by the presentation upon the stage even of the most caustic of Saturday reviewers, the sharpest operator of the nineteenth century, although in the very act of baiting a playwright! The young experimentalist would be shown to the door with the utmost celerity. His manuscript would not even be unrolled—in all probability his theatrical friend would read him a lecture upon his utter misconception of the purposes of the stage. "My dear Sir," we can imagine him saying, with that mixture of blandness and impatience with which a practical man encounters an idealist, "there cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that the world cares for what literary persons say of each other. Your testy old gentle-

man might be bearable if he had a daughter to marry, or a son to disinherit; but all this noise and fury about a review! Tut! the audience would be bored to death." And so any sensible adviser would say. Yet Sir Fretful between his two tormentors, and the cheerful bustle and assured confidence of Mr. Puff, have held their ground when hundreds of sensational dramas have drooped and died. Never was a more wonderful literary feat. The art of puffing has been carried to a perfection unsuspected by Mr. Puff, and not one person in a thousand has the most remote idea who Cumberland was,—but the *Critic* is as delightful as ever, and we listen to the gentlemen talking with as much relish as our grandfathers did. Nay, the simplest-minded audience, innocent of literature, and perhaps not very sure what it all means, will still answer to the touch, and laugh till they cry over the poor author's wounded vanity and the woes of Tilburina. Shakespeare, it is evident, found the machinery cumbrous, and gave up the idea of making Sly and his mockers watch the progress of the *Taming of the Shrew*, and Beaumont and Fletcher lose our interest altogether in their long-drawn-out by-play though the first idea of it is comical in the highest degree. Nor could Fielding keep the stage with his oft-repeated efforts, notwithstanding the wit and point of many of his dialogues. But Sheridan at last, after so many attempts, found out the right vein. It is evident by the essays made in his own boyhood that the subject had attracted him from a very early period. His lively satire, keen as lightning, but harmless as the flashing of the summer storm which has no thunder in it, finds out every crevice in the theatrical mail. When

he has turned the author outside in, and exposed all his little weaknesses (not without a sharper touch here, for it is Mr. Puff the inventor of the art of advertising as it was in those undeveloped days, and not any better man who fills the place of the successful dramatist), he turns to the play itself with the same delightful perception of its absurdities. The bits of dialogue which are interposed sparkle like diamonds.

"*Sneer.* Pray, Mr. Puff, how came Sir Christopher Hatton never to ask that question before?

Puff. What, before the play began?—how the plague could he?

Dangle. That's true, i'faith!"

And again—

"*Dangle.* Mr. Puff, as he knows all this, why does Sir Walter go on telling him?

Puff. But the audience are not supposed to know anything of the matter, are they?

Sneer. True; but I think you manage ill: for there certainly appears no reason why Sir Walter should be so communicative.

Puff. 'Fore Gad, now, that is one of the most ungrateful observations I ever heard!—for the less inducement he has to tell all this, the more I think you ought to be obliged to him, for I'm sure you'd know nothing of the matter without it.

Dangle. That's very true, upon my word."

In these interpolations every word tells; but there is no malice in the laughing champion who strikes so full in the centre of the shield, and gets such irresistible fooling out of the difficulties of his own art. It is amusing to remember, though Leigh Hunt in his somewhat shrill and bitter sketch of Sheridan points it out with unfriendly zeal, that the sentimental dramas which he

afterwards prepared for the stage were of the very order which he here exposed to the laughter of the world. "It is observable, and not a little edifying to observe," says this critic, "that when those who excel in a spirit of satire above everything else come to attempt serious specimens of the poetry and romance whose exaggerations they ridicule, they make ridiculous mistakes of their own and of the very same kind: *so allied is habitual want of faith with want of all higher power.* The style of the *Stranger* is poor and pick-thank enough; but *Pizarro* in its highest flights is downright booth at a fair—a tall spouting gentleman in tinsel." The words in italics are worthy of Joseph Surface. But the more sympathetic reader will be glad to remember that *Pizarro* has passed out of the recollection of the world so completely that no one but a biographer or unfriendly critic would ever think nowadays of associating it with Sheridan's name. "Serious specimens of poetry and romance" were entirely out of his way. The most extravagant of his admirers has never claimed for him any kindred with the Shakespearian largeness which makes Lear and Touchstone members of the same vast family. That Sheridan himself, when driven to it, fell into the lowest depths of dramatic bathos need not injure our appreciation of his delightful and lighthearted mockery and exposure of all its false effects. In the *Critic* he is at the height of his powers; his keen sense of the ridiculous might have, though we do not claim it for him, a moral aim, and be directed to the reformation of the theatre; but his first inspiration came from his own enjoyment of the humours of the stage and perception of its whimsical incongruities. No doubt, however, he was weighed

down by the preposterous dramas which were submitted to him for the use of the company at Drury Lane, when he broke forth into this brilliant piece of fun and mockery. It afforded a most useful lesson to the dramatical writers then abusing their prerogative and filling the stage with bathos and highflown folly; and there is no reason why we should refuse to Sheridan the credit of a good purpose, as well as of a most amusing and in no way ill-natured extravaganza, admirably true, so far as it goes, and skimming the surface of society and of some developments of human nature with an unerring hand.

Another of the many strange anecdotes told of Sheridan's dilatoriness and headlong race against time at the end, is connected with the composition of the *Critic*. It is perfectly in keeping with his character, but it must not be forgotten that it was his policy to suffer such tales to be current, and even to give them a certain amount of justification. The *Critic* was announced and talked of long before its completion, nay, before it was begun—not a singular event perhaps in dramatic experience. It was then sent to the theatre in detached scenes, as had been the case with the *School for Scandal*. Finally a definite date was fixed for its appearance—the 30th of October; but when the 27th had arrived, the work, to the despair of everybody connected with the theatre, was still incomplete.

We quote from *Sheridaniana*, an anonymous publication intended to make up the deficiencies of Moore's life, the following account of the amusing expedient by which the conclusion was accomplished.

"Dr. Ford and Mr. Linley, the joint proprietors, began to get nervous and uneasy, and the actors were absolutely *au desespoir*,

especially King, who was not only stage-manager, but had to play Puff. To him was assigned the duty of hunting down and worrying Sheridan about the last scene; day after day passed, until the last day but two arrived, and still it did not make its appearance. At last Mr. Linley, who, being his father-in-law, was pretty well aware of his habits, hit upon a stratagem. A night rehearsal of the *Critic* was ordered, and Sheridan having dined with Linley was prevailed upon to go. When they were on the stage, King whispered to Sheridan that he had something particular to communicate, and begged he would step into the second greenroom. Accordingly Sheridan went, and found there a table with pens, ink, and paper, a good fire, an armchair at the table, and two bottles of claret, with a dish of anchovy sandwiches. The moment he got into the room, King stepped out and locked the door; immediately after which Linley and Ford came up and told the author that until he had written the scene he would be kept where he was. Sheridan took this decided measure in good part: he ate the anchovies, finished the claret, wrote the scene, and laughed heartily at the ingenuity of the contrivance."

We have the less compunction in quoting an anecdote, vouched for only by anonymous witnesses, that there can be little doubt it was a kind of story which Sheridan would have given no contradiction to. The dash of sudden creation making up for long neglect of duty was the conventional mode of procedure for such a man. To discuss the immorality of such a mode of action would be altogether out of place here. Every evasion of duty is due to some sort of selfishness; but the world has always been indulgent (up to a certain point) of the indolent and vagrant character which is conjoined with a capacity for great work in an emergency, and, so long as the thing is done, and done with such brilliancy at last, will condone any irregularity in the doing of it.

The result, it is said, of the *Critic* was immediately apparent. For some time after its production the old type of tragedy became impossible, at least at Drury Lane. Dramas in which "the heroine was found to be forestalled by Tilburina," could not be any great loss to the stage; and it is amusing to realise the aspect of an audience fresh from the *Critic*, when such a tragedy was placed on the boards, while the spectators vainly struggled to shut out a recollection of the Governor opposing his honour to all the seductions of his daughter, or Whiskerandos refusing to die again on any entreaty, from their minds. It was little wonder if all the craft were furious, and the authors—whose productions were chased by laughter from the stage—could not find any abuse bitter enough for Sheridan.

There was, unfortunately, very good cause for complaint on other grounds. To speak of his habits of business as being bad would be absurd, for he had no business habits at all. His management of the theatre when it fell into his hands was as discreditable as could be. He allowed everything to go to confusion, and letters and the manuscripts submitted to him, and every application relating to the theatre, to accumulate, till even the cheques for which he sent to his treasury, and which he had a thousand uses for, were confounded in the general heap and lost to him, till some recurring incident or importunate applicant made an examination of these stores a necessity. It is somewhat difficult to make out how far and how long, or if ever, he was himself responsible for the stage-management; but all the business of the theatre went to confusion in his hands, and it would appear that at first at least the company took

example by the disorderly behaviour of their head. Garrick, who had hoped so highly from the new proprietor and done so much for him, had to apologise as he could for a state of things which looked like chaos come again. "Everybody is raving against Sheridan for his supineness," cries one of Garrick's correspondents; and the unfortunate Hawkins, the prompter whose Amen upon the end of the manuscript we have described, affords us a picture of the kingdom of misrule which existed at Drury Lane which is pitiful enough:

"We played last night *Much Ado About Nothing*," (writes this martyr), "and had to make an apology for the three principal parts. About twelve o'clock Mr. Henderson sent word that he was not able to play. We got Mr. Louis from Covent Garden, who supplied the part of Benedick. Soon after, Mr. Parsons sent word he could not play. Mr. Moody supplied the part of Dogberry; and about four in the afternoon Mr. Vernon sent word he could not play. Mr. Mattock supplied his part of Balthazar. I thought myself very happy in getting these wide gaps so well stopped. In the middle of the first act a message was brought to me that Mr. Lamash, who was to play the part of Borachio, was not come to the house. I had nobody then who could go on for it, so I was obliged to cut two scenes in the first and second act entirely out, and get Mr. Wrighton to go on for the remainder of the piece. At length we got the play over without the audience finding it out. We had a very bad house. Mr. Parsons is not able to play in the *School for Scandal* to-morrow night: do not know how we shall be able to settle that. I hope the pantomime may prove successful, and release us from this dreadful situation."

This was the condition into which the orderly and well-governed theatre had fallen soon after Garrick resigned into Sheridan's younger, and, as he hoped, better hands—the young Hercules who was to succeed old

Atlas in carrying the weight of the great undertaking on his shoulders, his kingdom and authority. The receipts, that infallible thermometer of theatrical success, soon began to fail, and everything threatened destruction, which was averted violently by the production one after the other of Sheridan's two plays, only to fall back into wilder chaos afterwards. For some part of this time the elder Sheridan, who, after their reconciliation, had engaged with his son as one of the members of the company, was stage manager. It is pleasant to see the claims of nature thus acknowledged, and to have this practical proof that Sheridan still believed in his father's talents and capabilities: but it does not seem to have been a fortunate attempt. Thomas Sheridan is said to have been as harsh as his son was easy and disorderly. His highest effort in his profession had been made in the hope of rivalling the great actor, with whose name and fame and all the traditions of his method Drury Lane was filled. He was an elocutionist, and believed salvation to depend upon a certain measure of delivery which he had himself invented and perfected, and concerning which he was at once an enthusiast and a pedant. To introduce such a man to the little despotism of a theatre, and set him over the members of an opposite faction in his art, was, even when tempered by the mildness of Linley, a desperate expedient, and his reign did not last very long. Whether it returned to Sheridan's own shiftless hands before a more competent head was found, it is difficult to make out; but at all events it was long enough under his disorderly sway to turn everything upside down. The ridiculous story referred to above about the authorship of the *School for Scandal* was

supported by the complaints of authors whose manuscript dramas had never been returned to them, and to whom it was easy to say that Sheridan had stolen their best ideas and made use of them as his own. A portion of one of the first scenes in the *Critic* which is now out of date, and which indeed many people may read without any real understanding of what it refers to, makes special reference to complaints and animadversions of this kind. Sir Fretful announces that he has sent his play to Covent Garden :—

"*Sneer.* I should have thought now it would have been better cast (as the actors call it) at Drury Lane.

Sir Fret. Oh lud, no ! never send a play there while I live. Hark'ye [*Whispers Sneer*].

Sneer. Writes himself ! I know he does——

Sir Fret. I say nothing. I take away from no man's merit, am hurt at no man's good fortune. I say nothing. But this I will say : through all my knowledge of life I have observed that there is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy.

Sneer. I believe you have reason for what you say, indeed.

Sir Fret. Besides—I can tell you it is not always safe to leave a play in the hands of those who write themselves.

Sneer. What ! they may steal from them, my dear Plagiary.

Sir Fret. Steal ! to be sure they may ; and egad ! serve your best thoughts as gipsies do stolen children, disfigure them to make them pass for their own——

Sneer. But your present work is a sacrifice to Melpomene, and he, you know——

Sir Fret. That's no security : a dexterous plagiarist may do anything. Why, sir, for aught I know, he might take out some of the best things in my tragedy and put them into his own comedy."

Thus it is apparent Sheridan himself was perfectly

conscious of the things that were said about him. He gave no contradiction, it is said, to the absurd story about the *School for Scandal*—how should he? To such an extraordinary accusation a contemptuous silence was the best answer. But it is with an easy good-humour, a laugh of the most cheerful mockery, that he confronts the bitter gossip which suggests the unsafeness of leaving manuscripts in his hands. He was not himself ashamed of his sins in this respect. His bag of letters all jumbled together, his table covered with papers, the suitors who waited in vain for a hearing, the business that was done by fits and starts in the interval of his other engagements,—all this did not affect his conscience. Cumberland, as if to prove his identity with Sheridan's sketch, describes in a letter to Garrick the ways of the new manager; and the reader will see by this brief paragraph how like was the portrait. "I read," said the dramatist, "the tragedy in the ears of the performers on Friday morning. I was highly flattered by the audience, but your successor in the management is not a representative of your polite attention to authors on such occasions, for he came in yawning at the fifth act with no other apology than having sat up two nights running. It gave me not the slightest offence, as I put it all to the habit of dissipation and indolence: but I fear his office will suffer from want of due attention," Sir Fretful adds.

This was within a few years of Sheridan's entry upon the property and responsibility of the theatre. All that he possessed—which means all that he had by miraculous luck and by mysterious means, which no one has ever been able to fathom, scraped together—was embarked in it. It had enabled him to enter at once upon a way of

living, and into a sphere of society in which the son of the needy player and lecturer, the idle youth of Bath, without a profession or a penny,—the rash lover who had married without the most distant prospect of being able to maintain his wife, yet haughtily forbidden her to exercise her profession and maintain him,—could never have expected to find himself. If ever man had an inducement to devote himself to the cultivation of the extraordinary opportunities which had been thus given to him, it was he. But he had never been trained to devote himself to anything, and the prodigality of good fortune which had fallen upon him turned his head, and made him believe no doubt that everything was to be as easy as the beginning. Garrick had made a great fortune from the theatre, and there was every reason to expect that Sheridan, so easily proved the most successful dramatist of his day, might do still more. But Sheridan, alas! had none of the qualities which were requisite for this achievement; even in composition he had soon reached the length of his tether. Twice he was able to make up brilliantly by an almost momentary effort for the bad effects of his carelessness in every practical way. But it is not possible for any man to go on doing this for ever, and the limit of his powers was very soon reached. If he had kept to his own easy trade and sphere, and refrained from public life and all its absorbing cares, would he have continued periodically to remake his own fortune and that of the theatre by a new play? Who can tell? It is always open to the spectator to believe that such might have been the case, and that Sheridan, put into harness like a few greater spirits, might have maintained an endless stream of production as Shakespeare did. But

there are indications of another kind which may lead critics to decide differently. Sheridan's view of life was not a profound one. It was but a vulgar sort of drama, a problem without any depths—to be solved by plenty of money and wine and pleasure, by youth and high spirits, and an easy lavishness which was called liberality, or even generosity as occasion served. But to Sheridan there was nothing to find out in it, any more than there is anything to find out in the characters of his plays. He had nothing to say further. Lady Teazle's easy penitence, her husband's pardon, achieved by the elegant turn of her head seen through the open door, and the entry of Charles Surface into all the good things of this life, in recompense for an insolent sort of condescending gratitude to his egotistical old uncle, were all he knew on this great subject. And when that was said he had turned round upon the stage, the audience, the actors, and the writers who catered for them, and made fun of them all with the broadest mirth, and easy indifference to what might come after. What was there more for him to say? The *Critic*, so far as the impulse of creative energy, or what, for want of a better word, we call genius, was concerned, was Sheridan's last word.

It was during this period of lawlessness and misrule at Drury, while either Sheridan himself or his father was holding the sceptre of unreason there, that Garrick died. He had retired from the theatre only a few years before, and had watched it with anxious interest ever since, no doubt deeply disappointed by the failure of the hopes which he had founded upon the new proprietorship and the brilliant young substitute whom

he had helped to put into his own place. Sheridan followed him to the grave as chief mourner—and his impressionable nature being strongly touched by the death of the man who had been so good to him, shut himself up for a day or two, and wrote a monody to Garrick's memory, which met with much applause in its day. It was seemly that some tribute should be paid to the great actor's name in the theatre of which he had for so long been the life and soul, though Sheridan's production of his own poem at the end of the play which was then running, as an independent performance and sacrifice to the *manes* of his predecessor was a novelty on the stage. It was partly said and partly sung, and must have been on the whole a curious interlude in its solemnity amid the bustle and animation of the evening's performance. As a poem it is not remarkable, but it is the most considerable of Sheridan's productions in that way. The most characteristic point in it is the complaint of the evanescence of an actor's fame and reputation, which was very appropriate to the moment, though perhaps too solemn for the occasion. After recording the honours paid to the poet and painter, he contrasts their lasting fame with the temporary reputation of the heroes of the stage.

"The actor only shrinks from time's award;
Feeble tradition is his mem'ry's guard;
By whose faint breath his merits must abide,
Unvouch'd by proof—to substance unallied!
E'en matchless Garrick's art to heaven resign'd,
No fix'd effect, no model leaves behind!
The grace of action, the adapted mien,
Faithful as nature to the varied scene;
The expressive glance whose subtle comment draws

Entranced attention and a mute applause ;
Gesture which marks with force and feeling fraught,
A sense in silence and a will in thought ;
Harmonious speech whose pure and liquid tone
Gives verse a music scarce confess'd its own.

. . . . .

All perishable ! like th' electric fire,
But strike the frame—and as they strike expire ;
Incense too pure a bodied flame to bear,
Its fragrance charms the sense and blends with air.
Where then—while sunk in cold decay he lies,
And pale eclipse for ever seals those eyes—
Where is the blest memorial that ensures
Our Garrick's fame? Whose is the trust?—'tis yours !"

No one would grudge Garrick all the honour that could be paid him on the stage where he had been so important a figure. But that the fame of the actor should be like incense which melts in the air and dies is very natural, notwithstanding Sheridan's protest. The poetry which inspires him is not his, nor the sentiments to which he gives expression. He is but an interpreter; he has no claim of originality upon our admiration. But Garrick, if any man, has had a reputation of the permanent kind. His name is as well known as that of Pope or Samuel Johnson. His generation, and the many notable persons in it, gave him a sort of worship in his day. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, his pall borne by noble peers, thirty-four mourning coaches in all the panoply of woe following, "while the streets were lined with groups of spectators falling in with the train as it reached the Abbey." And up to this day we have not forgotten Garrick. He died in 1779, just four years after the beginning of Sheridan's connection with the theatre.

The Monody came in between the *School for Scandal* and the *Critic*, the keenest satire and laughter alternating with the dirge, which, however, was only permitted for a few nights—the audience in general have something else to do than to amuse itself by weeping over the lost.

It must have been shortly after this solemn performance that the theatre found a more suitable manager in the person of King the actor: and though Sheridan never ceased to harass and drain it, yet the business of every day began to go on in a more regular manner. His father retired from the head of the affairs, and he had fortunately too much to do cultivating pleasure and society to attempt this additional work,—even with the assistance of his Betsey, who seems to have done him faithful service through all these early years. He was still but twenty-nine when his growing acquaintance with statesmen and interest in political affairs opened to the brilliant young man, whom everybody admired, the portals of a more important world.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC LIFE.

WHILE Sheridan was completing his brief career in literature, and bringing fortune and fame to one theatre after another by the short series of plays, each an essay of a distinct kind in dramatic composition, which we have discussed, his position had been gradually changing. It had been from the beginning, according to all rules of reason, a perfectly untenable position. When he established himself in London with his beautiful young wife they had neither means nor prospects to justify the life which they immediately began to lead, making their house, which had no feasible means of support, into a sort of little social centre, and collecting about it a crowd of acquaintances much better off than they, out of that indefinite mass of society which is always ready to go where good talk and good music are to be had, to amuse themselves at the cost of the rash entertainers, who probably believe they are "making friends" when they expend all their best gifts upon an unscrupulous, though fashionable, mob. Nothing could be more unwarrantable than this outset upon an existence which was serious to neither of them, and in which

wit and song were made the servants of a vague and shifting public which took everything and gave nothing. Society (in words) judges leniently the foolish victims who thus immolate themselves for its pleasure, giving them credit for generosity and other liberal virtues: but it is to be feared that the excitement of high animal spirits and the love of commotion and applause have more to do with their folly than kindness for their fellow-creatures. The two young Sheridans had both been brought up in an atmosphere of publicity, and to both of them an admiring audience was a sort of necessity of nature. And it is so easy to believe, and far easier then than now, that to "make good friends" is to make your fortune. Sheridan was more fortunate than it is good for our moral to admit any man to be. His rashness, joined to his brilliant social qualities, seemed at first—even before dramatic fame came in to make assurance sure—likely to attain the reward for which he hoped, and to bring the world to his feet. But such success, if for the moment both brilliant and sweet, has a Nemesis from whose clutches few escape.

It is evident that there were some connections of his boyish days, Harrow schoolfellows, who had not forgotten him, or were ready enough to resume old acquaintance—and gay companions of the holiday period of Bath, among whom was no less a person than Windham—who helped him to the friendship of others still more desirable. Lord John Townshend, one of these early friends, brought him acquainted with the most intimate and distinguished of his after associates—the leader with whom the most important part of his life was identified. It was thus that he formed the friendship of Fox.

"I made (Townshend writes) the first dinner-party at which they met, having told Fox that all the notions he might have conceived of Sheridan's talents and genius from the comedy of *The Rivals*, etc., would fall infinitely short of the admiration of his astonishing powers which I was sure he would entertain at the first interview. The first interview between them — there were very few present, only Tickell and myself, and one or two more — I shall never forget. Fox told me after breaking up from dinner that he always thought Hare, after my uncle Charles Townshend, the wittiest man he ever met with, but that Sheridan surpassed them both infinitely: and Sheridan told me next day that he was quite lost in admiration of Fox, and that it was a puzzle to him to say what he admired most, his commanding superiority of talent and universal knowledge, or his playful fancy, artless manners, and benevolence of heart, which showed itself in every word he uttered."

At very nearly the same time Sheridan became acquainted with Burke. Dr. Johnson himself, it is said, proposed him as a member of the Literary Club, and his friendship and connection with Garrick must have introduced him widely among the people whom it is distinction to know. "An evening at Sheridan's is worth a week's waiting for," Fox is reported to have said. The brilliant young man with his lovely wife was such a representative of genius as might have dazzled the wisest. He had already made the most brilliant beginning, and who could tell what he might live to do with the world still before him, vigorous health and undaunted spirits, and all the charm of personal fascination to enhance those undeniable powers which must have appeared far greater then, in the glow of expectation, and lustre of all they were yet to do, than we know them now to have been? And when he stepped at once from the life, without any visible means, which he had been living, to the posi-

tion of proprietor of Drury Lane, with an established occupation and the prospect of certain fortune, there seemed nothing beyond his legitimate ambition, as there was nothing beyond his luxury and hospitality, and lavish enjoyment. Social success so great and rapid is always rare, and the contrast between the former life of the poor player's penniless son, walking the streets of Bath in idleness without a sixpence in his pocket, and that of the distinguished young dramatist on the edge of public life, making a close alliance with two of the first statesmen of the day, invited everywhere, courted everywhere, must have been overwhelming. If his head had been turned by it, and the head of his Eliza (or his Betsey as he calls her with magnanimous disdain of finery), who could have been surprised? That his foundations were altogether insecure, and the whole fabric dangerous and apt to topple over like a house of cards, was not an idea which, in the excitement of early triumph, he was likely to dwell upon.

He had, as is evident from the scattered fragments which Moore has been careful to gather up, a fancy for politics and discussion of public matters at an early period, and intended to have collected and published various essays on such subjects shortly after his marriage. At least it is supposed that the solemn announcement made to Linley of "a book" on which he had been "very seriously at work," which he was just then sending to the press, "and which I think will do me some credit if it leads to nothing else," must have meant a collection of these papers. Nothing more was ever heard of it so far as appears; but they were found by his biographer among the chaos of scraps and uncompleted

work through which he had to wade. Among these, Moore says, "are a few political letters, evidently designed for the newspapers, some of them but half copied out, and probably never sent, . . ." and "some commencements of periodical papers under various names, *The Dictator*, *The Dramatic Censor*, etc., none of them apparently carried beyond the middle of the first number;" among which, oddly enough, — a strange subject for Captain Absolute to take in hand, — "is a letter to the Queen recommending the establishment of an institution for the instruction and maintenance of young females in the better classes of life, who, from either the loss of their parents or poverty, are without the means of being brought up suitably to their station," to be founded on the model of St. Cyr, placed under the patronage of Her Majesty, and entitled "The Royal Sanctuary." This fine scheme is supported by eloquence thoroughly appropriate at once to the subject in such hands, and to the age of the writer. "The dispute about the proper sphere of women is idle," he says. "That men should have attempted to draw a line for their orbit shows that God meant them for comets, and above our jurisdiction. With them the enthusiasm of poetry and idolatry of love is the simple voice of nature." . . . "How can we be better employed," the young man adds with a lofty inspiration which puts all modern agitations on the subject to shame, "than in perfecting that which governs us? The brighter they are the more shall we be illumined. Were the minds of all women cultivated by inspiration men would become wiser of course. They are a sort of pentagraphs with which nature writes on the heart of man: what she delineates on the original

map will appear on the copy." This fine contribution to the literature of a subject which has taken so important a place among the discussions of to-day would perhaps, however, scarcely accord with the tone of the arguments now in use.

From this romantic question he diverged into politics proper; and under the stimulation of London life, and his encounter with the actual warriors of the day, the tide had begun to run so strongly that Sheridan ventured an unwary stroke against the shield which Dr. Johnson had just hung up against all comers in his pamphlet on the American question. Fortunately for himself it did not come to anything, for he had intended, it appears, to instance Johnson's partisanship on this occasion as a proof of the effect of a pension, describing "such pamphlets" as "trifling and insincere as the venal quit-rent of a birthday ode," and stigmatising the great writer himself, the Autocrat of the past age, as "an eleemosynary politician who writes on the subject merely because he has been recommended for writing otherwise all his lifetime." Such profanity will make the reader shiver: but fortunately it never saw the light, and with easy levity the young dramatist turned round and paid the literary patriarch such a compliment upon the stage as perhaps the secret assault made all the warmer. This was conveyed in a prologue written by Sheridan to a play of Savage:—

> "So pleads the tale that gives to future times
> The son's misfortunes and the parent's crimes;
> There shall his fame if own'd to-night survive,
> Fix'd by the hand that bids our language live."

Another political essay of a less personal character

upon the subject of Absenteeism in Ireland also forms one of these unfinished relics. Sheridan was so little of an Irishman in fact that there is not, we think, a single trace even of a visit to his native country from the time he left it as a child, and all his personal interests and associations were in England. But his family had veered back again to the place of their birth, his brother and sisters having settled in Dublin, and no doubt a warmer interest than the common would naturally be in the mind of a man whose veins were warmed by that sunshine which somehow gets into English blood on the other side of the narrow seas. In those elementary days when Ireland was but beginning to find out that her woes could have a remedy, Absenteeism was the first and greatest of the evils that were supposed to oppress her, and the optimists of the period were disposed to believe that could her landlords be persuaded to reside on their estates, all would be well. The changed ideas and extraordinary development of requirements since that simple age make it interesting to quote Sheridan's view of the situation then. He sets before us the system which we at present identify with the tactics rather of Scotch than of Irish landlords, that of sacrificing the people to sheep (since followed by deer), and substituting large sheep farms for the smaller holdings of the crofters or cotters, with considerable force, although argument on that side of the question has gone so much further and sustained so many changes since then.

"It must ever be the interest of the Absentee to place his estate in the hands of as few tenants as possible, by which means there will be less difficulty or hazard in col-

lecting his rents and less entrusted to an agent, if the estate require one. The easiest method of effecting this is by laying out the land for pasturage, and letting it in grass to those who deal only in a 'fatal living crop,' whose produce we are not allowed a market for where manufactured, while we want art, honesty, and encouragement to fit it for home consumption. Thus the indolent extravagance of the lord becomes subservient to the interests of a few mercenary graziers—shepherds of most unpastoral principles—while the veteran husbandman may lean on the shattered unused plough and view himself surrounded with flocks that furnish raiment without food. Or if his honesty be not proof against the hard assaults of penury, he may be led to revenge himself on those ducal innovators of his little field—then learn too late that some portion of the soil is reserved for a crop more fatal even than that which tempted and destroyed him.

"Without dwelling on the particular ill effects of non-residence in this case, I shall conclude with representing that powerful and supreme prerogative which the Absentee foregoes—the prerogative of mercy, of charity. The estated resident is invested with a kind of relieving providence—a power to heal the wounds of undeserved misfortune, to break the blows of adverse fortune, and leave chance no power to undo the hopes of honest persevering industry. There cannot surely be a more happy station than that wherein prosperity and worldly interest are to be best forwarded by an exertion of the most endearing offices of humanity. This is his situation who lives on the soil which furnishes him with means to live. It is his interest to watch the devastation of the storm, the ravage of the flood, to mark the pernicious extremes of the elements, and by a judicious indulgence and assistance to convert the sorrows and repinings of the sufferer into blessings on his humanity. By such a conduct he saves his people from the sin of unrighteous murmurs, and makes heaven his debtor for their resignation."

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tenants into the present fierce endeavour to get rid of landlords altogether. In the end of last century everybody repeated the outcry. It was the subject of Miss Edgeworth's popular stories, as well as of young Sheridan's first essay in political writing. Perhaps, had the appeal been cordially responded to in these days, there would have been a less dangerous situation, a milder demand, in our own.

These not very brilliant but sensible pages were the first serious attempts of Sheridan, so far as appears, to put together his thoughts upon a political subject. He had shown no particular inclination towards public life in his earlier days: no resort to debating clubs, like that which at a later period brought Canning under the eyes of those in power, is recorded of him. Oratory in all probability had been made odious to him by his father's unceasing devotion to his system, and the prominence which the art of elocution had been made to bear in his early life. And it is a little difficult to make out how it was that, just as he had achieved brilliant success in one career he should have so abruptly turned to another, and set his heart and hopes on that in preference to every other path to distinction. No doubt a secret sense that in this great sphere there were superior triumphs to be won must have been in his mind. Nobody, so far as we are aware, has ever doubted Sheridan's honesty or the sincerity of his political opinions. At the same time it can scarcely be imagined that the acquaintance of Fox and Burke had not a large share in determining these opinions, and that other hopes and wishes, apart from the impulses of patriotism and public spirit, had not much to do in turning him towards a course of life so little

indicated by anything in its beginning. There is no appearance that Sheridan cared very much for literary fame. His taste was not refined nor his mind highly cultivated; he thought, like Byron and George III., that Shakspeare was a much over-rated writer. He was very difficult to please in his own diction, and elaborated both written dialogues and spoken speeches with the most anxious care; but fame as an author was not what he looked for or cared for, nor would such a reputation have answered his purpose. Social success was what he aimed at—he wanted to be among the first, not in intellect, but in fact: to win his way into the highest elevation, and to stand there on an equality with whosoever should approach. For such an aim as this, literature, unaided, can do but little. The days of patronage, in which an author was the natural hanger-on and dependent of a great man, are not so dissimilar as they appear, to our own: except in so far that the patron in former days paid a more just equivalent for the distinction which his famous hanger-on might give him. In modern times the poet who is content to swell the train of a great family and get himself into society by that means, gets a very precarious footing in the enchanted circle, and is never recognised as one of the fine people who give him a great deal of vague praise but nothing else. This was a sort of favour which Sheridan would never have brooked. He had made that clear from the beginning. He would not creep into favour or wait for invitations to great houses, but boldly and at once took the initiative, and himself invited the great world, and became the host and entertainer of persons infinitely more important than himself. There is no subject on which the easy morality of society has

been more eloquent than on the folly of the artist and man of letters who, not content with having all houses thrown open to them, insist upon entertaining in their own persons, and providing for dukes and princes what can be but a feeble imitation, at the best, of their own lordly fare. But we think that the sympathetic reader, when he looks into it, will find many inducements to a charitable interpretation of such seeming extravagance. The artist is received everywhere: he is among, but not of, the most brilliant assemblages, perhaps even he lends them part of their attractions: but even in the very stare with which the fine ladies and fine gentlemen contemplate him, he will read the certainty that he is a spectacle, a thing to be looked at—but not one of them. In his own house the balance is redressed, and he holds his fit place. Something of this feeling perhaps was in the largeness of hospitality with which Sir Walter Scott threw open his doors, a magnanimous yet half-disdainful generosity, as who should say, "If you will stare, come here and do it, where I am your superior as master of my house, your inferior only out of high courtesy and honour to my guest." Sheridan was not like Scott; but he was a proud man. And it pleased his sense of humour that the Duchess of Devonshire, still balancing in her mind whether she should receive these young people, should be his guest instead, and have the grace extended to her, instead of first extending it to him. And no doubt his determination to acquire for himself, if by any possibility he could, a position in which he should be on the same level as the greatest,—not admitted on sufferance but an indispensable part of society,—had something to do with the earnestness with which he threw

himself into public life. The origin of a great statesman is unimportant. Power is a dazzling cloak which covers every imperfection, whereas fame of other kinds but emphasizes and points them out.

This is by no means to say that Sheridan had no higher meaning in his political life. He was very faithful to his party and to Fox, and later to the less respectable patron with whom his name is associated, with little reward of any kind. But he was not an enthusiast like Burke, any more than a philosopher, nor was his patriotism or his character worthy to be named along with those of that noble and unfortunate politician, with whom for one period of their lives Sheridan was brought into a sort of rivalship. Burke was at all times a leading and originating spirit, penetrating the surface of things; Sheridan a light-hearted adventurer in politics as well as in life, with keen perceptions and a brilliant way of now and then hitting out a right suggestion and finding often a fine and effective thing to say. It is impossible, however, to think of him as influencing public opinion in any great or lasting way. He acted on the great stage of public life, on a large scale, the part of the Horatios—nay, let us say the Mercutios of the theatre,—sometimes by stress of circumstances coming to the front with a noble piece of rhetoric or even of pure poetry to deliver once in a way, always giving a brilliancy of fine costume and dazzle and glitter on the second level. If the motives which led him to that greatest of arenas were not solely the ardours of patriotism, they were not the meaner stimulants of self-interest. He had no thought of making his fortune out of his country; if he hoped to get advancement by her, and honour, and

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a place among the highest, these desires were at least not mercenary, and might with very little difficulty be translated into that which is still considered a lofty weakness—that which Milton calls the last infirmity of noble minds—a desire for fame. It is easy to make this pursuit look very fine and dazzling: it may be mean enough on the other hand.

It was in 1780, when he was twenty-nine, that Sheridan entered Parliament. It was his pride that he was not brought in for any pocket borough, but was elected by the town of Stafford, in which the freemen of the burgh had the privilege of choosing their member. How they exercised that choice—agreeably, no doubt, to themselves, and very much so to the candidate, whose path was thus extraordinarily simplified—may be seen in the account of Sheridan's election expenses, where there is one such broad and simple entry as the following: —"248 *Burgesses, paid* £5 5*s. each.*" A petition against his return and that of his colleague was not unnaturally presented, but came to nothing, and Sheridan's first speech was made in his own defence. It was not a very successful one. The House, attracted by his reputation in other scenes, and by the name, which by this time was so well known in society, heard him "with particular attention;" but he, whose future appearances were to carry with them the enthusiastic applauses of the most difficult audience in England, had to submit to the force of ridicule, which he himself so often and so brilliantly applied in after times, and to that still more appalling ordeal, the chill attention and disappointment of his hearers. He is said to have rushed up to the reporters' gallery where Woodfall was busy with his notes, and to

have asked his opinion. "I am sorry to say I do not think this is your line," said that candid friend; "you had much better have stuck to your former pursuits," on hearing which Sheridan rested his head on his hands for a few minutes and then vehemently exclaimed—"It is in me, however, and, by G——, it shall come out." The quiver of disappointment, excitement, and determination in this outcry is very characteristic. It did come out, and that at no very great interval, as everybody knows.

Sheridan entered political life at a time when it was full of commotion and conflict. The American war was in full progress, kept up by the obstinacy of the King and the subserviency of his Ministers against almost all the better feeling of England, and in face of a steadily increasing opposition, which extended from statesmen like Burke and Fox down to the other extremity of society — to the Surrey peasant who was William Cobbett's father, and who "would not have suffered his best friend to drink success to the King's arms." Politics were exceptionally keen and bitter, since they were in a great measure a personal conflict between a small number of men pitted against each other—men of the same training, position, and traditions, but split into two hereditary factions, and contending fiercely for the mastery—while the nation had little more to do with it than to stand at a distance vaguely looking on, with no power of action and even an imperfect knowledge of the proceedings of Parliament, which was supposed to represent and certainly did rule them. That the public had any right at all to a knowledge of what was going on in the debates of the two Houses, was but a recent idea,

and still the reports were to the highest degree meagre and unsatisfactory; while the expression of public feeling through the newspapers was still in a very early stage. But within the narrow circle which held power, and which also held the potential criticism which is the soul of party in England, the differences of opinion were heightened by personal emulations, and violent oppositions existed between men of whom we find a difficulty in discovering now why it was that they did not work continuously side by side, instead of, with spasmodic changes, in separate parties. There were points, especially in respect to the representation of the people, in which Pitt was more liberal than Fox: and the Whigs, thenceforward to be associated with every project of electoral reform, were Conservative to the highest degree in this respect, and defended their close boroughs with all the zeal of proprietorship. In 1780, when Sheridan entered Parliament, the King took an active part in every act of the Government, with an obedient minister under his orders, and a Parliament filled with dependents and pensioners. No appeal to the country was possible in those days, or even thought of. No appeal, indeed, was possible anywhere. It was the final battle-ground, where every combatant had his antagonist, and the air was always loud with cries of battle. The Whig party had it very much at heart to reduce the power of the Court, and clear out the accumulated corruptions which stifled wholesome life in the House of Commons; but they had no very strong desire to widen the franchise or admit the mass of the people to political privileges. Sheridan, indeed, had taken part along with Fox during that very year in a Reform meeting which had passed certain "Resolutions on the

state of the representation," advocating the right of the people to universal suffrage and annual parliaments; but it is scarcely possible to believe that their share in it was more than a pleasantry. "Always say that you are for annual parliaments and universal suffrage, then you are safe," Fox is reported to have said, with no doubt a twinkle in his eye: while Burke made merry over the still more advanced opinions of some visionary politicians, "who—founding on the latter words of a statute of Edward III. that a parliament should be holden every year once, and more often if need be—were known by the denomination of Oftener-if-need-bes." "For my part," he would add, "I am an Oftener-if-need-be." Thus the statesmen jested at their ease, very sure that nothing would come of it, and not unwilling to amuse themselves with schemes so extravagant.

Among the leaders of the party with which Sheridan threw in his fortunes, a very high, perhaps the highest place was held by Burke, who was in some respects like himself, a man of humble origin, with none of the dignified antecedents possessed by the others, though with a genius superior to them all, and the highest oratorical powers: the countryman, perhaps the model, perhaps the rival, of the new recruit with whom he had so many external points of likeness. It is curious to find two such men, both Irishmen, both in the higher sense of the word adventurers, with the same command of eloquence, at the head of a great English political party at the same moment. There does not seem ever to have been the same cordiality of friendship between them, notwithstanding, or perhaps in consequence of, the similarity of their circumstances, as existed between each of

them and the genial and gracious Fox, whose lovableness and sweetness of nature seem to have vanquished every heart and kept an atmosphere of pleasantness about him, which breathes through every page in which he is named. To have come at once into the close companionship of such men as these, to be permitted to share their counsels, to add his word to theirs, to unite with them in all their undertakings, and, dearest joy of all, to fight by their side in every parliamentary tumult, and defy the Tories and the Fates along with them, was an elevation which might well have turned the head of the young dramatist who had so little right to expect any such astonishing advancement.

And the firmament all around this keen and eager centre was gloomy and threatening;—in America the war advancing to that stage in which continuance becomes an impossibility and a climax of one kind or another must be arrived at;—in Ireland, which in those days was the Ireland of the Protestant ascendency, the reverse of everything that calls itself Irish now—a sort of chronic semi-rebellion. In India, where the Company were making their conquests and forming their government in independence of any direct imperial control, a hundred questions arising which would have to be settled ere long;—in France, the gathering of the revolutionary storm, which was soon to burst and affect all the world. A more exciting outlook could not be. The existing generation did not perhaps realise the crowding in of troubles from every side as we do, to whom the whole panorama is rolled out; while naturally there were matters which we take very calmly as knowing them to have passed quite innocuously over the great vitality of England,

which to them looked dangers unspeakable. But we need not attempt to enter here into that detailed narrative of the political life of the period which would be necessary did we trace Sheridan through every debate he took part in, and every political movement in which he was engaged. This has been recently done in a former volume of this series with a completeness and care which would render a repeated effort of the same character a superfluity, even were the writer bold enough to venture upon such a competition. The political surroundings and events of Burke's public life were to a great extent those of Sheridan also, and it would be almost an impertinence to retrace the ground which Mr. Morley has gone over so thoroughly. We will therefore confine ourselves to an indication of the chief movements in which Sheridan was personally involved, and in which his impetuous eloquence produced an effect which has made his name historical. This result was not immediately attained; but it is evident that the leaders of the party must have very soon perceived how valuable a recruit the young member for Stafford was, since he was carried with them into office after little more than two years of parliamentary life, in the short accession to power of the Whig party after the fall of Lord North. What he had done to merit this speedy elevation it is difficult to see. He was made one of the under-secretaries of state in the Rockingham ministry, and had to all appearance the ball at his foot. The feeling entertained on this subject by his family, watching from across the Channel with much agitation of hope the extraordinary and unaccountable advance he was making, is admirably set forth in the following letter from his brother:—

"I am much obliged to you for your early intelligence concerning the fate of the ministry, and give you joy on the occasion, notwithstanding your sorrow for the departure of the good opposition. I understand very well what you mean by this sorrow; but as you may be now in a situation in which you may obtain some substantial advantage to yourself, for God's sake improve the opportunity to the utmost, and don't let dreams of empty fame (of which you have had enough in conscience) carry you away from your solid interests. I return you many thanks for Fox's letter; I mean for your intention to make him write one—for as your good intentions always satisfy your conscience, and that you seem to think the carrying of them into execution to be a mere trifling ceremony, as well omitted as not, your friends must always take the will for the deed. I will forgive you, however, on condition that you will for once in your life consider that though the will alone may perfectly satisfy yourself, your friends would be a little more gratified if they were sometimes to see it accompanied by the deed—and let me be the first upon whom you try the experiment. If the people here are not to share the fate of their patrons, but are suffered to continue in the government of this country, I believe you will have it in your power, as I am certain it will be in your inclination, to fortify my claims upon them, by recommendation from your side of the water, in such a manner as to insure to me what I have a right to expect from them, but of which I can have no certainty without that assistance. I wish the present people may continue here, because I certainly have claims upon them, and considering the footing that Lord C—— and Charles Fox are on, a recommendation from the latter would now have every weight; it would be drawing a bill upon Government here, payable at sight, which they dare not protest. So, dear Dick, I shall rely upon you that this will *really* be done; and, to confess the truth, unless it be done and speedily, I shall be completely ruined."

The delightful *naïveté* of this letter, and its half-provoked tone of good advice and superior wisdom, throws a humorous gleam over the situation. That it was

Sheridan's bounden duty "for God's sake" to take care that no foolish ideas should prevent him from securing substantial advantage to himself, and in the meantime and at once an appointment for his brother, is too far beyond question to be discussed; but the writer cannot but feel an impatient conviction that Dick is quite capable of neglecting both for some flummery about fame, which is really almost too much to be put up with. Charles Sheridan got his appointment, which was that of Secretary of War in Ireland, a post which he enjoyed for many years. But the "substantial advantage" which he considered it his brother's duty to secure for himself never came.

Sheridan's first taste of the sweets of office was a very short one. The Rockingham ministry remained in but four months, during which time they succeeded in clearing away a considerable portion of the accumulated uncleanness which had recently neutralised the power of the House of Commons. The measures passed in this brief period dealt a fatal blow at that overwhelming influence of the Crown which had brought about so many disasters, and, by a stern cutting off of the means of corruption, "mark the date when the direct bribery of members absolutely ceased," which is the highest praise. But Lord Rockingham died and Lord Shelburne succeeded him, who represented but one side of the party, and the withdrawal of Fox from the ministry brought Sheridan back—it is said partly against his own judgment, which says all the more for his fidelity to his leader—into the irresponsibility and unprofitableness of opposition. The famous Coalition, which came into being a year later, restored him to office as Secretary of the Treasury. Sheridan went on forming his style as a politi-

cal speaker with great care and perseverance through all these vicissitudes. At first he is said to have written his speeches out carefully, and even learnt them by heart, "using for this purpose," Moore tells us, "the same sort of copy-books which he had employed in the first rough draughts of his plays." Afterwards a scribble on a piece of paper was enough to guide him, and sometimes it is very evident he made a telling retort or a bold attack without preparation at all. One of these, preserved in the collection of his speeches, has a vivid gleam of restrained excitement and personal feeling in it which gives it an interest more human than political. It occurred in the discussion by the House of the preliminaries of the treaty afterwards known as the Treaty of Versailles, in which the independence of America was formally recognised. In Sheridan's speech on the subject he had referred pointedly to Pitt, who had become Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Shelburne's administration, and who had objected to something in a previous debate as inconsistent with the established usage of the House. "This convinced him," Sheridan said, "that the right honourable gentleman was more a practical politician than an experienced one," and that "his years and his very early political exaltation had not permitted him to look whether there had been precedents, or to acquire a knowledge of the journals of the House." Pitt resented this assault upon his youth as every young man is apt to do, and did his best to turn the war into the enemy's camp. Here is the somewhat ungenerous assault he made, one, however, which has been repeated almost as often as there have been eminent literary men in public life :—

"No man admired more than he did the abilities of that right honourable gentleman, the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns, and his epigrammatic points; and if they were reserved for a proper stage, they would no doubt receive what the honourable gentleman's abilities always did receive, the plaudits of the audience; and it would be his fortune '*sin plausu gaudere theatri.*' But this was not the proper scene for the exhibition of these elegancies; and he therefore must beg leave to call the attention of the house to the serious consideration of the very important questions now before them."

This unhandsome reference to Sheridan's theatrical fame was one of those uncalled-for and unworthy attacks which give the person assailed an enormous advantage over the assailant; and Sheridan was quite equal to the occasion.

"Mr. Sheridan then rose to an explanation, which being made, he took notice of that particular sort of personality which the right honourable gentleman had thought proper to introduce. He need not comment upon it—the propriety, the taste, the gentlemanly point of it, must have been obvious to the House. But, said Mr. Sheridan, let me assure the right honourable gentleman that I do now, and will at any time when he chooses to repeat this sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good humour. Nay, I will say more, flattered and encouraged by the right honourable gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if I ever again engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption—to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters—the character of the Angry Boy in the *Alchymist*."[1]

Apart from sparrings of this description, however, in which his light hand and touch were always effective,

[1] This threat was carried out by the issue of a pretended playbill, in which not only was the part of the Angry Boy allotted to Pitt, but the audacious wit proceeded to assign that of Surly to "His ——"!

Sheridan gradually proceeded to take a larger part in the business of the House, his speeches being full of energy, lucidity, and point, as well as of unfailing humour. But it was not till the celebrated impeachment of Warren Hastings, one of the most dramatic episodes in parliamentary history, that he rose to the fulness of his eloquence and power. The story of that episode has been often told: almost more often and more fully than any other chapter of modern history: and everybody knows how and why it was that—having added to the wealth of his chiefs and the power of the nation, and with a consciousness in his mind of having done much to open up and confirm an immense new empire to his country—this Indian ruler and lawgiver, astonished, found himself confronted by the indignation of all that was best and greatest in England, and ere he knew was placed at the bar to account for what he had done, the treasures he had exacted, and the oppressions with which he had crushed the native states and their rulers.

> "Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
> And jewelled turban with a smile of peace?
> Or do we grind her still?"

Cowper had said as he opened his scanty newspaper in the fireside quiet at Olney some time before. The manner in which such a prize was added to the British crown has slipped from the general memory nowadays, and we are apt to forget how many deeds were done on that argument that would not bear the light of public inquiry. But this great trial will always stand as a proof that the time had arrived in the history of England

when she would no longer tolerate the highhanded proceedings of the conqueror, and that even national aggrandisement was not a strong enough inducement to make her overlook injustice and cruelty though in the ends of the earth.

It was Burke who originated the idea of impeachment for Warren Hastings: it was Pitt, by his unexpected vote with the accusing party, who made it practicable; but Sheridan was the hero of the occasion. One of the worst charges against Hastings was his conduct to the princesses of Oude, the old and helpless Begums whom he imprisoned and ill used in order to draw from them their treasures; and this moving subject, the one of all others best adapted for him, it was given to Sheridan to set forth in all the atrocity of its circumstances, and with all the power of eloquent indignation of which he was master, before the House, as one of the grounds for the impeachment. The speech was ill reported, and has not been preserved in a form which does it justice, but we have such details of its effect as have rarely been laid up in history. The following account, corroborated by many witnesses, is taken from the summary given at the head of the extracts from this oration in the collection of Sheridan's speeches:—

"For five hours and a half Mr. Sheridan commanded the universal interest and admiration of the house (which from the expectation of the day was uncommonly crowded) by an oration of almost unexampled excellence, uniting the most convincing closeness and accuracy of argument with the most luminous precision and perspicuity of language, and alternately giving form and energy to truth by solid and substantial reasoning; and enlightening the most extensive and involved subjects with the purest clearness of logic and the brightest

splendours of rhetoric. Every prejudice, every prepossession, was gradually overcome by the force of this extraordinary combination of keen but liberal discrimination; of brilliant yet argumentative wit. So fascinated were the auditors by his eloquence that when Mr. Sheridan sat down the whole house —the members, peers, and strangers—involuntarily joined in a tumult of applause, and adopted a mode of expressing their admiration, new and irregular in the house, by loudly and repeatedly clapping with their hands. Mr. Burke declared it to be the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united of which there was any record or tradition. Mr. Fox said, 'All that he had ever heard—all that he had ever read—when compared with it dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun.' Mr. Pitt acknowledged that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or of modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind. The effects it produced were proportioned to its merits. After a considerable suspension of the debate, one of the friends of Mr. Hastings—Mr. Burgess—with some difficulty obtained for a short time a hearing; but, finding the house too strongly affected by what they had heard to listen to him with favour, sat down again. Several members confessed they had come down strongly prepossessed in favour of the person accused, and imagined nothing less than a miracle could have wrought so entire a revolution in their sentiments. Others declared that though they could not resist the conviction that flashed upon their minds, yet they wished to have leave to cool before they were called upon to vote; and though they were persuaded it would require another miracle to produce another change in their opinions, yet for the sake of decorum they thought it proper that the debate should be adjourned. Mr. Fox and Mr. A. Taylor strongly opposed this proposition, contending that it was not less absurd than unparliamentary to defer coming to a vote for no other reason that had been alleged than because members were too firmly convinced; but Mr. Pitt concurring with the opinions of the former, the debate was adjourned."

What Pitt said was that they were all still "under

the wand of the enchanter;" while other members individually made similar acknowledgments. "Sir William Dalton immediately moved an adjournment, confessing that in the state of mind in which Mr. Sheridan's speech had left him it was impossible for him to give a determinate opinion." That great audience, the most difficult, the most important in Christendom, was overwhelmed like a company of sympathetic women, by the quick communicating thrill of intellectual excitement, of generous ardour, of wonder, terror, pity. It was like a fine intoxication which nobody could resist. Here is another amusing instance of the influence it exercised:—

"The late Mr. Logan . . . author of a most masterly defence of Mr. Hastings, went that day to the House of Commons prepossessed for the accused, and against the accuser. At the expiration of the first hour he said to a friend, 'All this is declamatory assertion without proof;' when the second was finished, 'This is a most wonderful oration.' At the close of the third, 'Mr. Hastings has acted most unjustifiably;' the fourth, 'Mr. Hastings is a most atrocious criminal;' and at last, 'Of all monsters of iniquity, the most enormous is Warren Hastings!'"

It was no wonder if the astonished members, with a feeling that this transformation was a kind of magic, unaccountable by any ordinary rule, were afraid of themselves, and dared not venture on any practical step until they had cooled down a little. It is the most remarkable instance on record in modern times of the amazing power of oratory. The public interest had flagged in the matter, notwithstanding the vehement addresses of Burke, but it awoke with a leap of excitement at this magic touch; and when, some months later, the trial took place according to an old and long-disused

formula in Westminster Hall, the whole world flocked to listen. Macaulay has painted the scene for us in one of his most picturesque pages. The noble hall full of noble people; the peers in their ermine; the judges in their red robes; the grey old walls hung with scarlet; the wonderful audience in the galleries; the Queen herself with all her ladies, among them the lively, weary little frizzled head with so much in it, of Fanny Burney, prejudiced yet impressionable, looking over Her Majesty's shoulder, and such faces as those of the lovely Duchess of Devonshire, the haughty beauty of Mrs. Fitzherbert, the half-angelic sweetness of Sheridan's wife, with many another less known to fame, and all the men whose names confer a glory on their age. "In the midst of the blaze of red draperies an open space had been fitted up with green benches and tables for the Commons." The great commoners who conducted the prosecution, the managers of the impeachment as they were called, appeared in full dress, even Fox, the negligent, "paying the illustrious tribunal the compliment of wearing a bag and sword." Amidst these public prosecutors the two kindred forms of Burke and Sheridan, both with a certain bluntness of feature which indicated their race, the latter at least, with those brilliant eyes which are so often the mark of genius, were the principal figures.

This wonderful scene lasted for months: and it may be supposed what an exciting entertainment was thus provided for society, ever anxious for a new sensation. Burke spoke for four days, and with great effect. But it was when it came to the turn of Sheridan to repeat his wonderful effort, and once more

plead the cause of the robbed and insulted Princesses, that public excitement rose to its height. "The curiosity of the public to hear him was unbounded. His sparkling and highly finished declamation lasted two days: but the hall was crowded to suffocation the whole time. It was said that fifty guineas had been paid for a single ticket." His speech, as a matter of fact, extended over four days, and the trial, which had begun in February, had lasted out till June, dragging its slow length along, when it came to this climax. Many of his colleagues considered this speech greatly inferior to the first outburst of eloquence on the same subject with which he had electrified the House of Commons. "Sheridan's speech on the Begums in the House admirable; in Westminster Hall contemptible," Lord Granville said, and such was also the opinion of Fox. But a greater than either was of a different opinion. In the sitting of the House held on the 6th of June, after an exciting morning spent in Westminster Hall, a certain Mr. Burgess, the same pertinacious person who had risen to speak in favour of Hastings, while still St. Stephens was resounding with applause and inarticulate with emotion on the day of Sheridan's first speech, got up once more, while all minds were again occupied by the same subject, to call the attention of the House to some small matter of finance. He was transfixed immediately by the spear of Burke. "He could not avoid offering his warmest congratulations to the honourable gentleman on his having chosen that glorious day, after the triumph of the morning, to bring forward a business of such an important nature," cried the great orator with contemptuous sarcasm; and he went on to applaud the

powerful mind of the stolid partisan who had proved himself capable of such an effort, "after every other member had been struck dumb with astonishment and admiration at the wonderful eloquence of his friend Mr. Sheridan, who had that day again surprised the thousands who hung with rapture on his accents, by such a display of talents as was unparalleled in the annals of oratory, and so did the highest honour to himself, to that House, and to the country."

The reader will be perhaps more interested, in this deluge of applause, to hear how the wife, of whom perhaps Sheridan was not worthy, yet who was not herself without blame, a susceptible creature, with a fine nature always showing under the levities and excitements that circumstances had made natural to her, exulted in his triumph.

"I have delayed writing (the letter is to her sister-in-law) till I could gratify myself and you by sending you the news of our dear Dick's triumph,—of our triumph I may call it,—for surely no one in the slightest degree connected with him but must feel proud and happy. It is impossible, my dear woman, to convey to you the delight, the astonishment, the adoration, he has excited in the breasts of every class of people. Every party prejudice has been overcome by a display of genius, eloquence, and goodness, which no one with anything like a heart about them could have listened to without being the wiser and the better all the rest of their lives. What must *my* feelings be, you only can imagine. To tell you the truth, it is with some difficulty that I can 'let down my mind,' as Mr. Burke said afterwards, to talk or think on that or any other subject. But pleasure too exquisite becomes pain, and I am at this moment suffering from the delightful anxieties of last week."

This triumph, however, like Sheridan's previous successes, would seem to have been won by a fit of accidental

exertion; for it was still as difficult as ever to keep him in harness and secure his attention. A letter quoted in Moore's life from Burke to Mrs. Sheridan makes the difficulty very apparent. The great statesman begins by skilful praise of Sheridan's abilities to propitiate his wife: and then implores Mrs. Sheridan's aid in "prevailing upon Mr. Sheridan to be with us this day at half after three in the Committee." The paymaster of Oude was to be examined, he adds with anxious emphasis. "Oude is Mr. Sheridan's particular province; and I do most seriously ask that he would favour us with his assistance." This proves how little he was to be relied upon, even now, in the very moment of triumph. Yet on the very next page we read of the elaborate manner in which his speech was prepared and of the exertions of his domestic helpers in arranging and classifying his materials; and he seems from Moore's account to have laboured indefatigably to acquire the necessary knowledge.

"There is a large pamphlet of Mr. Hastings," Moore tells us, "consisting of more than two hundred pages, copied out mostly in her (Mrs. Sheridan's) writing, with some assistance from another female hand. The industry, indeed, of all about him was called into requisition for the great occasion: some busy with the pen and scissors making extracts, some pasting and stitching his scattered memorandums in their places, so that there was scarcely a member of his family that could not boast of having contributed his share to the mechanical construction of this speech. The pride of its success was of course equally participated: and Edwards, a favourite servant of Mr. Sheridan, was long celebrated for his professed imitation of the manner in which his master delivered (what seems to have struck Edwards as the finest part of the speech) his closing words, 'My Lords, I have done.'"

Macaulay informs us that Sheridan "contrived with a knowledge of stage effect, which his father might have envied, to sink back as if exhausted into the arms of Burke, who hugged him with the energy of generous admiration" when the speech was done.

In every way this was the highest point of Sheridan's career. Engaged in the greatest work to which civilised man can turn his best faculties, the government of his country, either potentially or by criticism, censure, and the restraining power of opposition, he had made his way without previous training, or any adventitious circumstances in his favour, to the very front rank of statesmen. When wrong was to be chastised and right established, he was one of the foremost in the work. His party did nothing without him : his irregular ways, the difficulty which there was even in getting him to attend a meeting, were all overlooked. Rather would the Whig leaders invent, like the proprietors of the theatre in former days, a snare in which to take him, or plead with his wife for her assistance, than do without Sheridan. This was what the player's son, the dramatist and stage manager, who was nobody, without education, without fortune, had come to. He was thirty-seven when he stood upon this apex of applause and honour — *al mezzo di cammin di nostra vita.* Had he died then, the wonder of his fame and greatness would have been lessened by no painful drawback. If he were extravagant, reckless, given to the easier vices, so were other men of his generation—and pecuniary embarrassment only becomes appalling when it reaches the stage of actual want, and when squalor and misery follow in its train. We linger upon the picture of

these triumphs—triumphs as legitimate, as noble, and worthy as ever man won—in which if perhaps there was no such enthusiasm of generous sentiment as moved Burke, there was at least the sincere movement of a more volatile nature against cruelty and injustice. It does not in reality enhance the greatness of a mental effort that it is made in the cause of humanity—but it enormously increases its weight and influence with mankind. And it was an extraordinary piece of good fortune for Sheridan, in a career made up hitherto of happy hits and splendid pieces of luck, that he should happily have lighted upon a subject for his greatest effort, which should not only afford scope for all his gifts, his impulsive generosity and tenderheartedness, as well, we may add, as that tendency to claptrap and inflated diction which is almost always successful with the multitude,—but at the same time should secure for himself as the magnanimous advocate a large share in that sympathy of the audience for the helpless and injured, which his eloquence raised into temporary passion. His subject, his oratorical power, the real enthusiasm which inspired him, even if that enthusiasm took fire at its own flame, and was more on account of Brinsley Sheridan than of the Begums, all helped in the magical effect. Even poor Mrs. Sheridan, who knew better than any one wherein the orator was defective, exulted in his triumph as "a display of genius, and eloquence, *and goodness.*" He was the champion of humanity, the defender of the weak and helpless. No doubt, in the glow of interest in his own subject to which he had worked himself up, he felt all this more fervently even than his audience, which again added infinitely to his power.

The trial came to nothing, as everybody knows. It lingered over years of tedious discussion, and through worlds of wearisome verbiage, and only got decided in 1795, when the accused, whose sins by this time had been half forgotten, whose foolish plans for himself were altogether out of mind, and whose good qualities had come round again to the recollection of the world, was acquitted. By that time the breaking up of the party which had brought him to the bar, so touchingly described by Macaulay, had come to pass; and though Sheridan still held by Fox, Burke had fallen apart from them both for ever. Professor Smyth, in his valuable little *Memoir of Sheridan*, gives a description of the orator's preparation for the postscriptal speech which he had to deliver six years after in 1794, in answer to the pleas of Hastings' counsel, which is very characteristic. Sheridan arrived suddenly one evening at the country residence where his son Tom was staying with Smyth the tutor—with his chaise full of papers, and announced his intention of getting through them all, and being ready with his reply the day after to-morrow. "The day after to-morrow! this day six months you mean," cried Smyth in consternation. Altogether Sheridan would seem to have taken five or six days to this trying work, recalling the recollection of his highest triumph, and refreshing his memory as to the facts, after a long and sad interval, filled with many misfortunes and downfalls.—He never stirred "out of his room for three days and evenings, and each of the three nights, till the motes, he told me, were coming into his eyes, though the strongest and finest that ever man was blest with," Smyth informs us. He dined every day with the tutor and Tom, the

bright and delightful boy who was a sweeter and more innocent reproduction of himself—and during these meals Smyth found that it was his part to listen, "making a slight occasional comment on what he told me he had been doing."

"On the morning appointed he went off early in a chaise and four to Grosvenor Street, and none of us, Tom told me, were to come near him till the speech was over. When he came into the manager's box he was in full dress, and his countenance had assumed an ashen colour that I had never before observed. No doubt Cicero himself must have quailed before so immense and magnificent an audience as was now assembled to hear him. He was evidently tried to the utmost, every nerve and faculty within him put into complete requisition."

No doubt Sheridan felt the ghost of his own glory rising up as a rival to him in this renewed and so changed appearance. The tutor felt that "his aspect was that of a perfect orator, and thought he was listening to some being of a totally different nature from himself:" but this postscriptal harangue has had no record of fame. And already the leaf was turned over, the dark side of life come upward, and Sheridan's glory on the wane.

CHAPTER V.

MIDDLE AGE.

THE middle of life is the testing-ground of character and strength. There are many who hold a foremost place in the heat of youth, but sink behind when that first energy is played out; and there are many whose follies happily die, and whose true strength is only known when serious existence with its weights and responsibilities comes upon them. Many are the revelations of this sober age. Sins which were but venial in the boy grow fatal in the man. The easy indolence, the careless good fellowship, the rollicking humour which we laugh at while we condemn them in youth, become coarser, vulgarer, meaner in maturity, and acquire a character of selfishness and brutality which was not theirs in the time of hope. In Sheridan's age, above all others, the sins of a Charles Surface were easily pardoned to a young man. He was better liked for being something of a rake; his prodigality and neglect of all prudent precautions, his rashness in every enterprise, his headlong career, which it was always believed something might turn up to guide into a better development at the end, were proofs of the generosity and truth of a character concealing nothing. All this

was natural at five-and-twenty. But at thirty-five, and still more at forty, the world gets weary of Charles Surface. His lightheartedness becomes want of feeling,—his rashness unmanly folly,—his shortcomings are everywhere judged by a different standard; and the middle-aged man whom neither regard for his honour, his duty, nor his family, can curb and restrain, who takes his own way whoever suffers, and is continually playing at the highest stakes for mere life, is deserted by public opinion, and can be defended by his friends with only faltering excuses. Sheridan had been such a man in his youth. He had dared everything, and won much from fate. Without a penny to begin with, or any of that capital of industry, perseverance, and determination which serves instead of money, he got possession of and enjoyed all the luxuries of wealth. He did more than this; he became one of the leading names in England, foremost on imperial occasions, and known wherever news of England was prized or read; and through all his earlier years the world had laughed at his shifts, his hairbreadth escapes, the careless prodigality of nature, which made it certain that by a sudden and violent effort at the end he could always make up for all deficiencies. It was a jest that

> "Of wit, of taste, of fancy, we'll debate,
> If Sheridan for once be not too late."

And in the artificial world of the theatre, the recklessness of the man and all his eccentricities had something in them which suited that abode of strong contrasts and effects. But after a course of years the world began to get tired of always waiting for Sheridan,

always finding that he had forgotten his word and his appointments, and never read, much less answered, his letters. There came a moment when everybody with one accord ceased and even refused to be amused by these eccentricities any longer, and found them to be stale jests, insolences, and characterised by a selfish disregard of everybody's comfort but his own.

This natural protest no doubt was accompanied by a gradual development of all that was most insupportable in Sheridan's nature. The entire absence in him of the faculty of self-control grew with his advancing years; but it was not till Providence had interposed and deprived him of the wife who, in her sweet imperfection, had yet done much for him, that any serious change happened in his fortunes. He lost his father in 1788, very shortly after his great triumph. There is no very evident sign that Thomas Sheridan ever changed his mind in respect to his sons, or ceased to prefer the prim and prudent Charles, who had bidden his brother not to be so foolishly moved by thoughts of fame as to neglect the substantial advantages which office might ensure to him. But it was Richard who attended upon the old man's deathbed, moved with an almost excessive filial devotion and regret, and buried him, and intended to place a fine inscription over him, written by no hand but that of Dr. Parr, the best of scholars. It was never done: but Charles Sheridan (who was present, however, neither at the sick-bed nor the grave) had already intimated the conviction of the family that in Dick's case the will had to be taken for the deed. This loss, however, was little to the greater blow which he suffered a few years later. Mrs. Sheridan is one of those characters who, without doing

anything to make themselves remarkable, yet leave a certain fragrance behind them as of something fine, and tender, and delicate. The reader will remember the letter referred to in the first chapter, in which she recounts her early troubles to her sympathising friend, a pretty and sentimental composition, with a touch of Evelina (who was the young lady's contemporary) in its confidences, and still more of Lydia Languish, whose prototype she might well have been. And there is a certain reflection of Lydia Languish throughout her life, softened by the cessation of sentimental dilemmas, but never without a turn for the romantic. That she was a good wife to Sheridan there seems little doubt: the accounts of the theatre kept in her handwriting, the long and careful extracts made and information prepared by her to help him—even the appeals to her on every side, from her father, anxious about the theatre and its business, up to Mr. Burke in the larger political sphere, all confident that she would be able to do what nobody else could do, keep Sheridan to an appointment—show what her office was between him and the world. Within doors, of all characters for the reckless wit to enact, he was the Falkland of his own drama, maddening a more hapless Julia, driving her a hundred times out of patience and out of heart with innumerable suspicions, jealousies, harassments of every kind. And no man who lived the life he was living, with the most riotous company of the time, could be a very good husband. He left her to go into society alone, in all her beauty and charm,—the St. Cecilia of many worshippers,—still elegant, lovely, and sentimental, an involuntary siren, accustomed to homage, and perhaps liking it a little, as

most people, even the wisest, do. There could be no want of tenderness to her husband in the woman who wrote the letter of happy pride and adoration quoted in the last chapter; and yet she was not herself untouched by scandal, and it was whispered that a young, handsome, romantic Irishman, in all the glory of national enthusiasm and with the shadow of tragedy already upon him, had moved her heart. It is not necessary to enter into any such vague and shadowy tale. No permanent alienation appears to have ever arisen between her and her husband, though there were many painful scenes, consequent upon the too finely-strung nerves, which is often another name for irritability and impatience, of both. Sheridan's sister, who lived in his house for a short time after her father's death, gives us a most charming picture of this sweet and attractive woman.

"I have been here almost a week in perfect quiet. While there was company in the house I stayed in my room, and since my brother's leaving us for Margate I have sate at times with Mrs. Sheridan, who is kind and considerate, so that I have entire liberty. Her poor sister's children are all with her. The girl gives her constant employment, and seems to profit by being under so good an instructor. Their father was here for some days, but I did not see him. Last night Mrs. S. showed me a picture of Mrs. Tickell, which she wears round her neck. . . . Dick is still in town, and we do not expect him for some time. Mrs. Sheridan seems now quite reconciled to those little absences which she knows are unavoidable. I never saw any one so constant in employing every moment of her time, and to that I attribute, in a great measure, the recovery of her health and spirits. The education of her niece, her music, books, and work, occupy every moment of the day. After dinner the children, who call her mamma-aunt, spend some time with us, and her manner to them is truly delightful."

Mrs. Tickell was Mrs. Sheridan's younger sister, and died just a year before her. In the meantime she had taken immediate charge of Tickell's motherless children, and the pretty "copy of verses" which she dedicated to her sister's memory embellishes and throws light upon her own.

"The hours, the days pass on ; sweet spring returns,
And whispers comfort to the heart that mourns
But not to mine, whose dear and cherished grief
Asks for indulgence, but ne'er hopes relief.
For oh, can changing seasons e'er restore
The lov'd companion I must still deplore ;
Shall all the wisdom of the world combined
Erase thy image, Mary, from my mind,
Or bid me hope from others to receive
The fond affection thou alone could'st give.
Ah no, my best belov'd, thou still shalt be
My friend, my sister, all the world to me.

. . . . . .

"Oh, if the soul released from mortal cares
Views the sad scene, the voice of mourning hears,
Then, dearest saint, did'st thou thy heaven forego,
Lingering on earth, in pity to our woe,
'Twas thy kind influence soothed our minds to peace,
And bade our vain and selfish murmurs cease.
'Twas thy soft smile that gave the worshipped clay
Of thy bright essence one celestial ray,
Making e'en death so beautiful, that we
Gazing on it, forgot our misery.
Then—pleasing thought ! ere to the realms of light
Thy franchised spirit took its happy flight,
With fond regard perhaps thou saw'st me bend
O'er the cold relics of my heart's best friend ;
And heard'st me swear while her dear hand I prest,
And tears of agony bedew'd my breast,
For her lov'd sake to act the mother's part,

And take her darling infants to my heart,
With tenderest care their youthful minds improve,
And guard her treasure with protecting love ;
Once more look down, blest creature, and behold
These arms the precious innocents enfold.
Assist my erring nature to fulfil
The sacred trust and ward off every ill ;
And oh ! let *her* who is my dearest care,
Thy blest regard and heavenly influence share.
Teach me to form her pure and artless mind,
Like thine, as true, as innocent, as kind,
That when some future day my hopes shall bless,
And every voice her virtue shall express,
When my fond heart delighted hears her praise,
As with unconscious loveliness she strays,
Such, let me say with tears of joy the while,
Such was the softness of my Mary's smile.
Such was *her* youth, so blithe, so rosy-sweet,
And such *her* mind unpractised in deceit,
With artless eloquence, unstudied grace,
Thus did she gain in every heart a place.
Then while the dear remembrance I behold,
Time shall steal on, nor tell me I am old,
Till nature wearied, each fond duty o'er,
I join my angel friend to part no more !"

There is something extremely sweet and touching in these lines, with their faded elegance, their pretty sentiment, the touch of the rococo in them which has now recovered popular favour, something between poetry and embroidery, and the most tender feminine feeling. All sorts of pretty things were said of this gentle woman in her day. Jackson of Exeter, the musician, who had some professional engagements with her father, and accompanied her often in her songs, said that "to see her as she stood singing beside him at the pianoforte, was like looking into the face of an angel." Another still higher authority,

the Bishop of Norwich, described her as "the connecting link between woman and angel." To Wilkes, the coarse and wild yet woman-loving demagogue, she was "the most modest flower he had ever seen." Sir Joshua painted her as St. Cecilia, and this was the flattering name by which she was known. Her letters, with a good deal of haste, and the faintest note of flippancy in them, are pretty too, full of news and society, and the card-tables at which she lost her money, and the children in whom her real heart was centred. The romantic girl had grown into a woman, not lofty or great, but sweet and clever, and silly and generous, a fascinating creature. Moore describes with a comical high-flown incongruity which reminds us of Mr. Micawber, her various qualities, the intellect which could appreciate the talents of her husband, the feminine sensibility that could passionately feel his success. "Mrs. Sheridan may well take her place beside these Roman wives," he says; "not only did Calpurnia sympathise with the glory of her husband abroad, but she could also, like Mrs. Sheridan, *add a charm to his talents at home by setting his verses to music and singing* them to her harp." Poor Siren, she had her triumphs, but she had her troubles also, many and sore. In Professor Smyth's little book there is an account of a scene which, though it happened after her death, throws some light upon one side of her troubled existence. Smyth had been engaged as tutor to Tom after his mother's death, and this was one of the interferences which he had to submit to. Sheridan had been paying a hurried visit to the house at Wanstead in which Tom and his tutor lived:

"It was a severe frost, and had been long, when he came one evening to dine, after his usual manner, on a boiled chicken, at 7, 8, or 9 o'clock, just as it happened, and had hardly drunk his claret, and got the room filled with wax lights, without which he could not exist, when he sent for me; and, lo and behold, the business was that he was miserable on account of Tom's being on the ice, that he would certainly be drowned, etc., and that he begged it of me as the greatest favour I could do him in some way or other to prevent it. I expostulated with him—that I skated myself—that I had a servant with a rope and ladder at the bank—that the ice would now bear a waggon, etc. etc.; and at last, seeing me grow half angry at his unreasonableness, he acquiesced in what I said, and calling his carriage, as he must be at Drury Lane that night he said, (it was then eleven and he was nine miles off), he withdrew. In about half an hour afterwards, as I was going to bed, I heard a violent ringing at the gate; I was wanted; and sure enough what should I see, glaring through the bars, and outshining the lamps of the carriage, but the fine eyes of Sheridan. 'Now do not laugh at me, Smyth,' he said, 'but I cannot rest or think of anything but this d—d ice and this skating, and you must promise me there shall be no more of it.' I said what may be supposed; and in short was at last obliged to thrust my hand through the bars, which he shook violently, in token that his wishes should be obeyed. 'Never was such a nonsensical person as this father of yours,' said I to Tom. There was no difficulty in coming to a common vote on that point; and so, after spending nearly an hour abusing him, half laughing and half crying, for I was as fond of skating as my pupil could be, lamenting our unhappy fate, we went to bed. We sent up various petitions and remonstrances while the frost lasted, but all in vain. 'Have a glass case constructed for your son at once,' said Mr. Grey to him—an observation which Tom used to quote to me with particular approbation and delight. I talked over the subject of Mr. Sheridan and his idle nervousness with Mrs. Canning, who lived at the end of the village. She told me that nothing could be done—that he would tease and irritate Mrs. Sheridan in this manner till she was ready to dash her head against the wall, being of the

same temperament of genius as her husband: that she had seen her burst into tears and leave the room; then the scene changed, and the wall seemed full as likely to receive his head in turn. The folly, however, Mrs. Canning said, was not merely once and away, but was too often repeated; and Mrs. Canning used sometimes, as she told me, to be not a little thankful that she was herself of a more ordinary clay, and that the gods, as in the case of Audrey, had not made her poetical."

This perhaps is the least comprehensible part of Sheridan's character. The combination of this self-tormentor, endowed with a faculty for extracting annoyance and trouble out of every new turn in his circumstances, and persecuting those who were dearest to him by his caprices, with the reckless and careless man of pleasure, is curious, and difficult to realise.

Mrs. Sheridan died in 1792. She had been taken to Bristol, in hopes that the change of air would do her good. But her time had come, and there was no hope for her. Her husband attended her with all the tenderness and anxiety which a man, no doubt remorseful, always impressionable, and ready to be moved by the sight, which was intolerable to him, of suffering—might be supposed to feel, watching over her with the profoundest devotion. "He cannot bear to think her in danger," writes a sympathetic friend, "or that any one else should; though he is as attentive and watchful as if he expected every moment to be her last. It is impossible for any man to behave with greater tenderness or to feel more on such an occasion." He was at her bedside night and day, "and never left her one moment that could be avoided." The crisis was one in which with his readiness of emotion, and quick and sure response to

all that touched him, he was sure to appear well. Moore found, among the mass of documents through which he had to pick his way, a scrap of paper evidently belonging to this period, which gives strange expression to that realistic and materialistic horror of death as death, which was one of the features of the time. "The loss of the breath from a beloved object long suffering in pain and certainty to die, is not so great a privation as the last loss of her beautiful remains if they remain so. The victory of the grave is sharper than the sting of death." There is something in this sentiment which makes us shudder. That crowning pang of separation,—

> "Our lives have fallen so far apart
> We cannot hear each other speak,"—

does not strike this mourner. The contact of the body and decay, the loss of "the beautiful remains," is what moves him. It is like a child's primitive horror of the black box and the deep hole. In his own dying hour an awe unspeakable stole over his face when he was informed that a clergyman had been sent for. These were things to be held at arm's length; when he was compulsorily brought in contact with them, the terror was almost greater than the anguish.

The Linley family had suffered terribly in these years, one following another to the grave. There is a most touching description of the father given by the actress Mrs. Crouch, which goes direct to the heart—

"After Miss Marion Linley died, it was melancholy for her to sing to Mr. Linley, whose tears continually fell on the keys as he accompanied her; and if in the course of her profession she was obliged to practise a song which he had been accustomed to hear his lost daughter sing, the similarity of

their manner and voices, which he had once remarked with pleasure, then affected him to such a degree that he was frequently forced to quit his instrument and walk about the room to recover his composure."

After his wife's death, Sheridan's life assumed another phase. He had no longer the anchor, such as it was, which steadied him—not even the tug of remorse to bring him home to a house where there was now no one waiting for him. We are indebted to Professor Smyth's narrative for a very graphic description of this portion of Sheridan's life. In the very formation of their connection, the peculiarities of his future employer were at once made known to him. It was appointed that he should meet Sheridan at dinner in town to conclude the arrangement about the tutorship, and to keep this appointment he came up specially from the country. The dinner hour was seven, but at nine Smyth and the friend who was to introduce him ate their cold meal without Sheridan, who then sent to say that he had been detained at the House, but would sup with them at midnight at the St. Alban's Tavern, whither they resorted with precisely the same result. Next day, however, the meeting did take place, and the ruffled soul of the young scholar, who had been extremely indignant to find himself thus treated, was soothed in a few minutes by the engaging manner and delightful speech of his patron. It was at Isleworth, Sheridan's country house, that they met, where very lately Madame de Genlis, that interesting and sentimental refugee, with her lovely daughter Pamela, the beautiful young creature whom Mrs. Sheridan had bidden Lord Edward Fitzgerald to marry when she died, had paid him a visit. The house was dirty and

desolate, the young observer thought, but the master of it the most captivating of men. His brilliant and expressive eyes, a certain modesty in his manner, for which the young Don was not prepared, struck Smyth above all: and he in his turn pleased the nervous and troubled father, who would have kept young Tom in a glass case had he dared. Afterwards another house was taken in Wanstead, in order that Sheridan's baby daughter might be placed under the charge of Mrs. Canning, the lady who had nursed Mrs. Sheridan and loved her, and who lived in this village; and here the boy and his tutor were sent. But a very short time after another blow fell upon Sheridan in the person of this child, whom Professor Smyth describes as the loveliest child he ever saw—an exceptional creature, whom Sheridan made a little goddess of, worshipping her with every baby rite that could be thought of. One night the house had awoke to unwonted merriment; a large childish party filled the rooms, and dancing was going on merrily, when Mrs. Canning suddenly flung open the door, crying out, "The child, the child is dying!" Sheridan's grief was intense and overwhelming: it was piteous to hear his moans during the terrible night that followed. His warm-hearted emotional being, horrified and panic-stricken by the approach of death, was once more altogether overwhelmed. The cruel climax of blow after blow crushed him to the earth.

During this time his parliamentary life was going on with interruptions, sometimes brightening into flashes of his pristine brilliancy. But at this moment there were other troubles besides those of his home and heart, to make his attendance irregular and withdraw his thoughts from public affairs. How the theatre had been going on

all this time it is difficult to make out. We are told of endless embarrassments, difficulties, and trouble, of a treasury emptied wantonly, and actors left without their pay,—of pieces which failed and audiences which diminished. But, on the other hand, we are informed that the prosperity of Drury Lane never was greater than during this period, while the old theatre lasted; and, as it was the only source from which Sheridan drew his income, it is very evident that, notwithstanding all irregularities, broken promises, crowds of duns, and general mismanagement, there was an unfailing fountain of money to be drawn upon. The whole story is confused. We are sometimes told that he was himself the manager, and it is certain that now and then he stooped even so far as to arrange a pantomime; while at the same time we find the theatre under the management of King at one time, of Kemble at another, men much better qualified than Sheridan. The mere fact indeed that the Kemble family was at that time on the boards of Drury Lane would seem a sufficient proof of the success of the theatre; but the continually recurring discovery that the proprietor's pressing necessities had cleared the treasury altogether was little likely to keep the troupe together or inspire its efforts. When any influential member of the company became unmanageable on this score, Sheridan's persuasive talent was called in to make all right. Once, we are told, Mrs. Siddons, who had declared that she would not act until her salary was paid, who had resisted successively the eloquent appeals of her colleagues and the despair of the manager, and was calmly sewing at home after the curtain had risen for the piece in which she was expected to perform, yielded help-

lessly when Sheridan himself, all suave and irresistible, came on the scene, and suffered herself to be driven to the theatre like a lamb. On another occasion it was Kemble that rebelled. We are tempted to quote, for its extremely ludicrous character, this droll little scene. Sheridan had come in accidentally to join the party in the green room after the performance, and, taking his seat at the table, made as usual a cheerful beginning of conversation. Kemble, however, would make no reply.

"The great actor now looked unutterable things, and occasionally emitted a humming sound like that of a bee, and groaned in spirit inwardly. A considerable time elapsed, and frequent repetitions of the sound, when at length, like a pillar of state, up rose Kemble, and in these words addressed the astonished proprietor: 'I am an EAGLE, whose wings have been bound down by frosts and snows, but now I shake my pinions and cleave into the genial air into which I was born!' He then deliberately resumed his seat, as if he had relieved himself from unsupportable thraldom."

Undaunted by this solemn address, Sheridan drew his chair closer, and at the end of the prolonged sitting left the place, not too steadily it is to be feared, arm in arm with the exasperated eagle, whom he had made as mild as any mouse. He did many feats of the same kind. Once, the bankers having sternly resisted all blandishments of manager, treasurer, all the staff of the theatre, Sheridan went in gaily to the charge, and returned in a few minutes beaming and successful, with the money they wanted. When he chose, nobody could stand against him.

Poor Mr. Smyth had a terrible life of it with this disorderly patron. His letters were neglected, his ap-

pointments broken, his salary left unpaid. Once his pupil Tom was sent for in hot haste to meet his father at a certain roadside inn, and there waited for days if not weeks in vain expectation of his errant parent, leaving the unfortunate preceptor a prey to all kinds of anxiety. Another time the long-suffering Smyth was left at Bognor with an old servant, Martha, without money, or occupation, waiting for a summons to London which never came; and, unable at last to live any longer on credit, after letters innumerable of entreaty, protestation, and wrath, went up to London full of fury, determined to endure no more; but was met by Sheridan with such cordial pleasure, surprise that he had not come sooner, and satisfaction with his appearance now, since Tom was getting into all sorts of mischief—that the angry tutor was entirely vanquished, and remorseful when he thought of the furious letter he had sent to this kind friend. What followed is worth quoting.

"'I wrote you a letter lately,' I said; 'it was an angry one. You will be so good as to think no more of it.' 'Oh, certainly not, my dear Smyth,' he said, 'I shall never think of what you have said in it, be assured;' and, putting his hand in his pocket, 'here it is,' he said, offering it to me. I was glad enough to get hold of it, but looking at it as I was about to throw it into the fire, lo, and behold, I saw that it had never been opened!"

Such exasperating yet ludicrous incidents were now commonplaces of Sheridan's life. "Intercourse with him," says Professor Smyth in a harsher mood, moved by some sting of bitter recollection, "was one eternal insult, mortification, and disappointment." There was a bag on his table into which all letters were stuffed indis-

criminately, and in which, when it was turned out, an astonished applicant for debt or favour might see a succession of his own letters as he sent them, with not one seal broken; but to lessen the mortification would find also letters enclosing money sent in answer to Sheridan's own urgent applications, turned out in the same condition, having been stuffed with the rest into that hopeless waste heap. When Professor Smyth appealed to Sheridan's old servant to know if nothing could be done to remedy this, Edwards told him a piteous story of how he had found Mr. Sheridan's window, which rattled, wedged up with bank-notes, which the muddled reveller, returning late at night, had stuffed into the gaping sash, out of his pocket. The story altogether is laughable and pitiful, a tragic comedy of the most woeful fooling. He had no longer youth enough to warrant an easy laugh, his reputation was going from him. He was harassed by endless creditors and duns, not able to stir out of his house without encountering two or three waiting to waylay him. The first of these, if he caught Sheridan at a moment when his pocket had just been replenished, would get the amount of his bill in full, whatever the others might have to say. The stories are endless which deal with these embarrassments, and the shifts and devices of the struggling man were endless also. They are very ridiculous to hear of, but how humiliating, miserable, and sickening to the heart and mind all these repetitions must have been! And then to make everything worse the poor old theatre fell to pieces, and the taste of the day demanded a costly and luxurious new building, according to improved fashions. The money to do this

was raised by the manufacture of new shares, in which there was no difficulty—but which naturally restricted the after profits of the original proprietors. And what was still more serious, the interval occupied in the rebuilding—during which time their profits may be said to have ceased altogether—and the excess of the cost over the estimate, made an enormous difference to men who had no reserve to fall back upon. The company in the meantime played in a small theatre at a great expense, and Sheridan, profuse and lavish, unable to retrench, not wise enough even to attempt retrenchment, got deeper and deeper into debt and embarrassment.

Besides all these misadventures a new and malign influence now got possession of him. He had been presented to the young Prince of Wales, at a time when that illustrious personage was still little more than a boy, and full, it was believed, of promise and hopefulness: and had gradually grown to be one of the most intimate habitués of his society, a devoted retainer, adviser, and defender, holding by him in all circumstances, and sharing the irregularities of his life, and the horseplay of his amusements. The *Octogenarian*, from whose rather foolish book we have occasionally quoted, gives a tissue of absurd stories, professedly heard from Sheridan's own lips, in which the adventures of a night are recorded, and the heir-apparent is represented to us in company with two statesmen, as all but locked up for the night at a police station. Whether this was true or not, it is certain that the glamour which there is in the rank of a royal personage, that dazzlement which so few can resist, fell upon Sheridan. His action as the adviser and representative in Parliament of this unillustrious Prince was

dignified and sensible, but the orgies of Carlton House were unfortunately too much in Sheridan's way to be restrained or discountenanced by him, and so much hope and possibility as remained in his life was lost in the vulgar dissipations of this depraved secondary court, and in the poor vanity of becoming boon companion and buffoon to that first gentleman in Europe, whose florid and padded comeliness was the admiration of his day. It was a poor end for the great dramatist, who has kept thousands of his countryfolk in genial, not uninnocent amusement for the last century, and for the great orator whose eloquence had disturbed the judgment of the most august of legislative assemblies, and shaken even the convictions of the hottest partisans; but it was an end to which he had been for some time tending, and which perhaps the loss of his wife had made one way or other inevitable.

In the meantime several events occurred which may fill up this division of the life of the man as apart from that of the politician and orator. In 1794 the new theatre was finished, and Sheridan sketched out for the opening a sort of extravaganza called *The Glorious First of June*, which was apparently in celebration of the naval victory of Lord Howe. The dialogue was not his, but merely the construction and arrangement, and in emulation of Tilbury and the feats of Mr. Puff, a grand sea-fight, with finale of a lovers' meeting to the triumphant sounds of "Rule Britannia," was introduced. The two pasteboard fleets rehearsed their manœuvres under the eye of the Duke of Clarence, and it is to be supposed that the spectacle had a triumphant success. A year or two later a less agreeable incident occurred in the history of

Drury Lane. Either deceived by the many who were ready to stake their credit upon the authenticity of the Ireland forgeries—then given forth as a discovery of precious relics of Shakespeare, including among them a completed and unpublished play—or deceived in his own person on the subject, one on which he was not learned, Sheridan accepted for the theatre this play, called *Vortigern*, and produced it with much pomp and magnificence. The audience was a crowded and critical one, and the public mind was so strongly roused by the question, that no doubt there was some factious feeling in the prompt and unmistakable rejection of the false Shakespeare, to which Kemble by his careless acting is said to have contributed. He had never believed in the discovery, and might be irritated that the decision had been made without consulting him. Dr. Parr, however, for whom Sheridan had a great respect, and with whom he kept up friendly relations all his life, was one of those who had headed the blunder, receiving the forgeries reverentially as pure Shakespeare; and it was natural enough that Sheridan's judgment should have been influenced by a man whom he must have felt a much better authority on the question than himself. For he was no student of Shakespeare, and his prevailing recklessness was more than enough to counterbalance the keen critical instinct which produced the *Critic*. In all likelihood he never investigated the question at all, but calculated on a temporary theatrical success, without other results. "Sheridan was never known to offer his opinion on the matter until after its representation on the stage: he left the public to decide on its merits," says one of his biographers: but the incident is not an agreeable one.

It was less his fault than that of his public, perhaps, that the stage, shortly after recovering from the salutary influence of the *Critic*, dropped again into bathos and the false heroic. "Kotzebue and German sausages are the order of the day," Sheridan himself is reported to have said when, with a shrug of his shoulders, he produced the *Stranger*, that culmination of the sentimental commonplace. Everybody will remember Thackeray's delightful banter of this wonderful production, which has, however, situations so skilfully prepared and opportunities so great for a clever actress, that it has continued to find a place in the repertory of most theatres, and is still to be heard of as the show-piece of a wandering company, as well as now and then on the most ambitious boards, its dubious moral and un-English *dénouement* notwithstanding. With Mrs. Siddons as Mrs. Haller, it may be imagined that the real pathos involved in the story would have full expression.

The success of the *Stranger* impelled Sheridan to another adaptation of a similar kind, in the tragedy of *Pizarro*, which he altered and decorated so much, it is said, as to make it almost his own. The bombast and claptrap of this production make us regret to associate it with his name, but here also the dramatic construction was good enough and the situations so striking as to rivet the attention of the audience, while the high-flown magnificence of the sentiments was such as always delights the multitude. When something was said to Pitt, between whom and Sheridan a gradually increasing enmity had grown, about the new drama, the minister answered, "If you mean what Sheridan wrote, there is nothing new in it. I have heard it all long ago in his speeches on Hastings' trial." It is undeniable that there is a good

deal of truth in this, and that Rolla's grand patriotic tirade which used to be in all school reading-books, as a lesson in elocution, bears a strong resemblance to many passages in Sheridan's speeches. All this helped its popularity. Grand addresses in favour of patriotism are always delightful to the galleries, and have at all times a charm for the general imagination: but in those days when there was actual fighting going on, and France, who had constituted herself the pedagogue of the world, to teach the nations the alphabet of freedom, was supposed to threaten and endanger England with her fiery teaching, it may be supposed to what a height of enthusiasm these exhortations would raise the audience. "They follow an adventurer whom they fear, and obey a power which they hate; we revere a monarch whom we love, a God whom we adore. They boast they come but to improve our State, enlarge our thoughts, and free us from the yoke of error! Yes! they will give enlightened freedom to our minds, who are themselves the slaves of passion, avarice, and pride!" Whether it were under Robespierre or Bonaparte, the common people in England scorned and feared the heated neighbour-nation which thought itself entitled to dictate to the world; and no doubt the popular mind made a rapid adaptation of these heroic phrases.

It had been hard to move the author to complete the *Critic:* and the reader will remember the trick of Linley and his coadjutors in those early days when the delays and evasions of the gay young man were an excellent jest, and their certainty of being able to put all right when they could lock him in with his work, had something triumphant in it. But all that was over now; old Linley

was dead, and a new generation who had no worship for Sheridan, and a very clear apprehension of the everlasting confusion produced by his disorderly ways, had taken the place of the light-hearted actors of old. But notwithstanding the awe-inspiring presence of Mrs. Siddons, and the importance of her brother, the astounding fact that when the curtain fell upon the fourth act of *Pizarro*, these theatrical potentates had not yet seen their parts for the fifth, which they had to study in the interval, is vouched for by various witnesses. It is hard to imagine the state of the actors' minds, the terrible anxiety of the manager in such an extraordinary dilemma, and still more hard to realise the hopeless confusion in the mind of the man who knew all that was being risked by such a piece of folly, and yet could not nerve himself to the work till the last moment. He was drifting on the rapids by this time, and going headlong to ruin, heedless of everything, name and fame, credit and fortune, the good opinion of his friends, the support of the public, all except the indulgence of the whim of the moment, or of the habit which was leading him to destruction.

He took another step about the same time which might perhaps have redeemed him had it been more wisely set about. He had met one evening, so the story goes, among other more important, and let us hope more well-bred people, a foolish, pretty girl, who either out of flippant dislike to his looks, or that very transparent *agacerie* by which foolish men are sometimes attracted in the lower ranks of life, regarded him with exclamations of "fright! horrid creature!" and the like, something in the style not of Evelina, but of Miss Burney's vulgar personages. He was by this time forty-

four, but ready enough still to take up any such challenge, and either he was piqued into making so frank a critic change her opinions, or the prettiness and foolishness of the girl amused and pleased him. He set to work at once to make her aware that a man of middle-age and unhandsome aspect may yet outdo the youngest and most attractive, and no very great time elapsed before he was completely successful. The lady's father was little pleased with the match. He was a clergyman, the Dean of Winchester, and might well have been indisposed to give his daughter and her five thousand pounds to a man with such a reputation. He made his consent conditional on the settling of fifteen thousand pounds, in addition to her own little fortune, upon her. Sheridan had always been great in financial surprises, and to the astonishment of the dean, the fifteen thousand was soon forthcoming. He got it this time by new shares of the theatre, thus diminishing his receipts always a little and a little more. A small estate, Polesden, in Surrey, was bought with the money, and for a time all was gaiety and pleasure. It was in order to tell him of this marriage that Sheridan sent for his son, from his tutor and his lessons, on the occasion already referred to, to meet him at Guildford at an inn of which he had forgotten the name. Four or five days after, the anxious tutor received a letter from Tom. "My father I have never seen," wrote the lad, "and all that I can hear of him is that instead of dining with me on Wednesday last, he passed through Guildford on his way to town with four horses and lamps, about twelve." Like father like son, the youth had remained there, though with only a few shillings in his pockets: but at the end was

so "bored and wearied out" that he would have been glad to return even to his books. Finally, he was sent for to London and informed of the mystery. His letter to Smyth disclosing this is so characteristic that it is worth quoting :—

"It is not I that am to be married, nor you. Set your heart at rest: it is my father himself; the lady a Miss Ogle, who lives at Winchester; and that is the history of the Guildford business. About my own age—better me to marry her, you will say. I am not of that opinion. My father talked to me two hours last night, and made out to me that it was the most sensible thing he could do. Was not this very clever of him? Well, my dear Mr. S., you should have been tutor to him, you see. I am incomparably the most rational of the two."

Moore describes the immediate result of the new marriage as a renewal of Sheridan's youth. "It is said by those who were in habits of intimacy with him at this period that they had seldom seen his spirits in a state of more buoyant vivacity," and there was perhaps a possibility that the new event might have proved a turning point. It is unfair to blame the foolish girl, who had no idea what the dangers were which she had so rashly undertaken to deal with, that she did not reclaim or deliver Sheridan. To do this was beyond her power as it was beyond his own.

CHAPTER VI.

DECADENCE.

SHERIDAN'S parliamentary career was long, and he took an important part in much of the business of the country; but he never struck again the same high note as that with which he electrified the House on the question of the impeachment of Warren Hastings. His speech in answer to Lord Mornington's denunciation of the revolution in France, perhaps his next most important effort, was eloquent and striking, but it had not the glow and glitter of the great oration under which the Commons of England held their breath. The French Revolution by this time had ceased to be the popular and splendid outburst of freedom which it had at first appeared. Opinions were now violently divided. The recent atrocities in France had scared England; and all the moving subjects which had inspired Sheridan before, the pictures of innocence outraged and the defenceless slaughtered, were now in the hands of his political opponents. He selected skilfully, however, the points which he could most effectively turn against them, and seizing upon Lord Mornington's description of the sacrifices by which French patriotism was compelled to prove itself, the compulsory loans and

services, the privations and poverty amid which the leaders of the revolution were struggling, drew an effective picture of the very different state of affairs in England, which throws a curious light upon the political condition of the time. Sheridan's party had suffered many losses and defections. A peer in those days or a wealthy landed gentleman, had need to be enlightened and strong-minded indeed, if not almost fanatical in opinion, to continue cordially on the side of those who were confiscating and murdering his equals on the other side of the Channel, and who had made the very order to which he belonged an offence against the State. The Whig nobility were no more stoical or heroic than other men, and the publication of Burke's *Reflections* and his impassioned testimony against the uncontrollable tendencies of the revolution had moved them profoundly even before the course of events proved his prophecies true. To make the conversion of these important adherents more easy, Pitt, on the other hand, held out his arms to them, and, as the fashion of the time was, posts and sinecures of all kinds rained upon the new converts. Sheridan, with instinctive perception of the mode of attack which suited his powers best, seized upon this with something of the same fervour as that with which, though in no way particularly interested in India, he had seized upon the story of the injured Begums and cruel English conquerors in the East. It was altogether the other side of the argument, yet the inspiration of the orator was the same. It was now the despoilers who were his clients: but their work of destruction had not been to their own profit. They were sufferers not gainers. No rich posts nor hidden treasures were reserved by them for themselves,

and the contrast between the advantages reaped by so many Englishmen arrayed against them, and the sacrifices and privations of the French patriots, was perfect. Sheridan took up the subject with all the greater wealth and energy of indignant conviction that he himself had never reaped any substantial advantage from the occasional elevation of his own party. He had carried no spoils with him out of office; he had not made hay while the sun shone. If anybody had a right to be called a disinterested politician he had, in this sense at least. His interest in the subjects which he treated might be more a party interest than any real devotion to the cause of freedom and humanity; but his hands were clean from bribe or pecuniary inducement; and his fervour, if perhaps churned up a little by party motives, was never ungenerous. The indignant bitterness with which he and the small party who adhered to Fox regarded the desertion of so many of their supporters, gave force to the reply with which he met Lord Mornington's unlucky description of the French efforts. On no other point could the comparison have been so completely in favour of the revolutionary. Sheridan takes the account of their privations triumphantly out of the hand of the narrator. Far different indeed, he cries scornfully, is the position of the rival statesmen and officials in England. He can imagine the address made to them "by our prudent minister" in words like the following, words which burn and sting with all the fire of satire—

"Do I demand of you wealthy citizens (it is Pitt who is supposed to be the speaker) to lend your hoards to Government without interest? On the contrary, when I shall come to propose a loan, there is not a man of you to whom I shall

not hold out at least a job in every part of the subscription, and a usurious profit upon every pound you devote to the necessities of your country. Do I demand of you, my fellow-placemen and brother-pensioners, that you should sacrifice any part of your stipends to the public exigency? On the contrary, am I not daily insuring your emoluments, and your numbers in proportion as the country becomes unable to provide for you? Do I require of you my latest and most zealous proselytes, of you who have come over to me for the special purpose of supporting the war, a war on the success of which you solemnly protest that the salvation of Britain and of civil society itself depends,—do I require of you that you should make a temporary sacrifice in the cause of human nature of the greater part of your private incomes? No, gentlemen, I scorn to take advantage of the eagerness of your zeal; and to prove that I think the sincerity of your attachment to me needs no such test I will make your interest co-operate with your principle; I will quarter many of you on the public supply instead of calling on you to contribute to it, and while their whole thoughts are absorbed in patriotic apprehensions for their country, I will dexterously force upon others the favourite objects of the vanity or ambition of their lives."

Then the orator turns to give his own judgment of the state of affairs. "Good God, sir," he cries, "that he should have thought it prudent to have forced this contrast upon our attention," and he hurries on with indignant eloquence to describe the representations made of "the unprecedented peril of the country," the constitution in danger, the necessity of "maintaining the war by every possible sacrifice," and that the people should not murmur at their burdens, seeing that their all was at stake—

"The time is come when all honest and disinterested men should rally round the throne as round a standard—for what? Ye honest and disinterested men to receive, for your own private emolument, a portion of those very taxes which they

themselves wring from the people on the pretence of saving them from the poverty and distress which you say the enemy would inflict, but which you take care no enemy shall be able to aggravate. Oh, shame! shame! is this a time for selfish intrigues, and the little dirty traffic for lucre and emolument? Does it suit the honour of a gentleman to ask at such a moment? Does it become the honesty of a minister to grant? Is it intended to confirm the pernicious doctrine, so industriously propagated by many, that all public men are impostors, and that every politician has his price? Or even where there is no principle in the bosom, why does not prudence hint to the mercenary and the vain to abstain a while at least, and wait the fitting of the times? Improvident impatience! Nay, even from those who seem to have no direct object of office or profit, what is the language which the actors speak? The Throne is in danger! we will support the Throne: but let us share the smiles of royalty; the order of nobility is in danger. 'I will fight for nobility,' says the viscount, 'but my zeal would be much greater if I were made an earl.' 'Rouse all the marquis within me,' exclaims the earl, 'and the peerage never turned forth a more undaunted champion in its cause than I shall prove.' 'Stain my green ribbon blue,' cries out the illustrious knight, 'and the fountain of honour will have a fast and faithful servant.'"

This scathing blast of satire must, one would think, have overwhelmed the Whig deserters, the new placemen and sinecurists, though it could not touch the impassioned soul of such a prophet as Burke, whose denunciations and anticipations had been so terribly verified. The reader already acquainted with the life of Burke will remember how, early in the controversy, before France had stained her first triumphs, Sheridan lost, on account of his continued faith in the Revolution, the friendship of his great countryman, whose fiery temper was unable to brook so great a divergence of

opinion, and who cut him sternly off, as he afterwards did a more congenial and devoted friend, Fox, by whom the breach was acknowledged with tears in a scene as moving as ever was enacted in the House of Commons. Sheridan did not feel it so deeply, the link between them being lighter, and the position of involuntary rivalship almost inevitable. And though it cannot be believed that his convictions on the subject were half so profound, or his judgment so trustworthy, his was the more difficult side of opinion, and his fidelity to the cause, which politically and we may even say conventionally, was that of freedom, was unwavering. The speech from which we have quoted could not, from its nature, be so carefully premeditated and prepared, as Sheridan's great efforts had heretofore been; but it had the advantage of being corrected for the press, and has consequently reached us in a fuller and more complete form than any other of Sheridan's speeches. Professor Smyth gives a graphic account of his sudden appearance at Wanstead along with the editor of the paper in which it had been reported, and of the laborious diligence with which he devoted himself to its revision, during several days of unbroken work. But we should scarcely have known our Sheridan had not this spasmodic effort been balanced by an instance of characteristic indolence and carelessness. Lord Mornington in his speech had made much reference to a French pamphlet by Brissot, a translation of which had been republished in London, with a preface by Burke, and largely circulated. Smyth remarked that Sheridan accepted Lord M.'s view of this pamphlet, and his quotations from it. "How could I do otherwise?" he said.

"I never read a word of it." Perhaps it was not necessary. The careful combination of facts and details was not in Sheridan's way; but in his haphazard daring a certain instinct guided him, and he seized unerringly the thing he could do, the point of the position, picturesque and personal, which his faculty could best assail.

A far less satisfactory chapter in his life was that already referred to, which linked Sheridan's fortunes with those of the Prince Regent, and made him, for a long time, almost the representative in Parliament of that royal personage. When the first illness of the King, in 1789, made it likely that power must come one way or other into the hands of the heir-apparent, there was much excitement, as was natural, among the party with which the name of the Prince of Wales was connected, and who, as appeared, had everything to hope from his accession, actual or virtual. It is scarcely necessary to our purpose to trace the stormy party discussions on the subject of the Regency, between the extreme claim put forth by Fox of the right of the Prince to be immediately invested with all the powers of royalty as his father's natural deputy and representative, and the equally extreme counter-statement of Pitt, dictated by alarm as the other was by hope, that "the Prince of Wales had no more right to exercise the powers of government than any other person in the realm." Sheridan's share in the debate was chiefly signalised by his threat, as injudicious as the original assertion of his leader, that the Prince might be provoked to make the claim which the other party opposed so strenuously;" "but his most important agency," says Moore, "lay

in the less public business connected with" the question. He was in high favour at Carlton House, and the chosen adviser of the Prince: and although Moore's researches enabled him to prove that the most important document in the whole episode—the Prince's letter to Pitt—was the production not of Sheridan but of the master-spirit Burke, Sheridan's pen was employed in various papers of importance; and though the post allotted to him in the shortlived new ministry was no more than that of Treasurer of the Navy, a position not at all adequate to his apparent importance, he was in reality a very active agent behind the scenes. The king's speedy recovery, however, at this moment was fatal to Sheridan's fortunes, and all that came of this momentary gleam of advancement to his family was that Charles Sheridan in Ireland, whose post had been the only gain of his brother's former taste of power, lost it in consequence of the new re-revolution of affairs, though he carried with him a pension of £1200 a year, probably a very good substitute. He was the only one profited in pocket by Sheridan's political elevation and fame. Once more, in 1806, after the death of Pitt, Sheridan followed Fox into office in the same unimportant post of Treasurer to the Navy. But Fortune was not on his side, and Fox's death in a few months withdrew him for ever from all the chances of power.

It seems inconceivable though true that the two great orators of the period, the men whose figures stand prominent in every discussion, and one of whom at least had so large and profound an influence on his time, should, when their party rose to the head of affairs, have been so unceremoniously disposed of. Sheridan's insig-

nificant post might be accounted for by his known incapacity for continued exertion; but to read the name of Burke as Paymaster of the Forces, fills the reader with amazement. They were both self-made, without family or connections to found a claim upon, but the eminence, especially of the latter, was incontestable. Both were of the highest importance to their party, and Sheridan was in the enjoyment of that favour of the Prince which told for so much in those days. And yet this was the best that their claims could secure. It is a somewhat humiliating proof of how little great mental gifts, reaching the height of genius in one case, can do for their possessor. Both Burke and Sheridan are favourite instances of the reverse opinion. It is a commonplace to quote them as examples of the manner in which a man of genius may raise himself to the highest elevation. And yet after they had dazzled England for years, one of them the highest originating soul, the profoundest thinker of his class, the other an unrivalled instrument at least in the hand of a great party leader, this was all they could attain to — Edmund Burke, Paymaster of the Forces; Brinsley Sheridan, Treasurer of the Navy. It is a curious commentary upon the unbounded applause and reputation which these two men enjoyed in their day, and the place they have taken permanently in the history of their generation.

Sheridan's connection with the Prince lasted for many years. He appears to have been not only one of his favourite companions, but for some time at least his most confidential adviser. When the Prince on his marriage put forth a second demand for the payment of his debts, after the distinct promise made on the first

occasion that no such claim should be made again, it was Sheridan who was the apologist, if apology his explanation can be called. He informed the House that he had advised the Prince to make no such pledge, but that it was inserted without the knowledge of either, and at a moment when it was impossible to withdraw from it. He added that he himself had drawn up a scheme of retrenchment which would have made such an application unnecessary, that he had put a stop to a loan proposed to be raised for the Prince in France as unconstitutional, and that he had systematically counselled an abstinence from all meddling in great political questions. Moore characterises this explanation as marked by "a communicativeness that seemed hardly prudent," and it is difficult to suppose that Sheridan's royal patron could have liked it; but he did not disown it in any way, and retained the speaker in his closest confidence for many years, during which Sheridan's time and pen and ready eloquence were always at his master's service. There is a strange mixture throughout his history of serviceableness and capacity for work, with an almost incredible carelessness and indolence, of which his behaviour at this period affords a curious example. He would seem to have spared no trouble in the Prince's service, to have been ready at his call at all times and seasons, conducting the most important negotiations for him, and acting as the means of communication between him and the leaders of his party. Perhaps pride and a gratified sense of knowing the mind of the heir-apparent better than any one else, may have supplied the place of true energy and diligence for the moment; and certainly he was zealous and busy in his patron's

affairs, disorderly and indifferent as he was in his own. And though his power and influence were daily decreasing in Parliament, his attendance becoming more and more irregular, and his interest in public business capricious and fitful, yet there were still occasions on which Sheridan came to the front with an energy and spirit worthy of his best days. One of these was at the time of the great mutiny at the Nore, when the ministry was embarrassed on all hands, the opposition violently factious, and every appearance alarming. Sheridan threw himself into the midst of the excitement with a bold and generous support of the Government which strengthened their hands in the emergency and did much to restore tranquillity and confidence. "The patriotic promptitude of his interference," says Moore, "was even more striking than it appears in the record of his Parliamentary labours." By this time Fox had withdrawn from the House, and no other of the Whig leaders showed anything of Sheridan's energy and public spirit. At a still later period, in the course of a discussion on the army estimates, he was complimented by Canning as "a man who had often come forward in times of public embarrassment as the champion of the country's rights and interests, and had rallied the hearts and spirits of the nation." The warmest admirer of Sheridan might be content to let such words as these stand as the conclusion of his parliamentary career.

Thus his life was chequered with bursts of recovery, with rapid and unexpected manifestations of power. Now and then he would rise to the height of a crisis, and by moments display a faculty prompt and eager and practical. Sometimes, on a special occasion, he would work

hard, "till the motes were in his eyes." There must have been in him some germ of financial genius which enabled him without any capital to acquire great property, and conduct what was in reality a large commercial speculation in his theatre with success for many years. All these qualities are strangely at variance with the background of heedlessness, indolence, and reckless self-indulgence which take both credit and purpose out of his life. He is like two men, one of them painfully building up what the other every day delights to pull down. His existence from the time of his wife's death seems, when we look back upon it, like a headlong rush to destruction; and yet even in the last chapter of his career there were times when he would turn and stand and present a manful front to fate. Though there is no appearance in anything he says or does of very high political principles, yet he held steadfastly by the cause of reform, and for the freedom of the subject, and against all encroachments of power, as long as he lived. He was on the side of Ireland in the troubles then as always existing, though of a changed complexion from those we are familiar with now. He would not allow himself to be persuaded out of his faith in the new principle of freedom in France, either by the excesses which disgraced it, or by the potent arguments of his friend and countryman. And he was disinterested and faithful in his party relations, giving up office almost unnecessarily when he considered that his political allegiance required it, and holding fast to his leader even when there was estrangement between them. All these particulars should be remembered to Sheridan's credit. He got nothing for his political services, at a time when sinecures were

common, and, with one exception, kept his political honour stainless, and never departed from his standard.

He served the Prince in the same spirit of disinterestedness—a disinterestedness so excessive that it looks like recklessness and ostentatious indifference to ordinary motives: that gratification in the confidence of royalty, which in all ages has moved men to sacrifices and labours not undertaken willingly in any other cause, seems a poor sort of inspiration when Royal George was the object of it; but in this case it was like master like man, and the boon companion whose wit enlivened the royal orgies was not likely perhaps to judge his Prince by any high ideal. He had never received from his royal friend "so much as the present of a horse or a picture," until in the year 1804 the appointment of Receiver of the Duchy of Cornwall was conferred upon him, an appointment which he announces to the then minister, Mr. Addington, with lively satisfaction and gratitude.

"It has been my pride and pleasure," he says, "to have exerted my humble efforts to serve the Prince without ever accepting the slightest obligation from him; but in the present case and under the present circumstances I think it would have been really false pride and apparently mischievous affectation to have declined this mark of his Royal Highness's confidence and favour."

It was no great return for so many services; and even this was not at first a satisfactory gift, since it had been previously bestowed (hypothetically) on some one else, and a long correspondence and many representations and explanations seem to have been exchanged before Sheridan was secure in his post—the only profit he carried with him out of his prolonged and brilliant political life.

The one instance, which has been referred to, in which his political loyalty was defective occurred very near the end of his career. Fox was dead, to whom, though some misunderstanding had clouded their later intercourse, he had always been faithful, and other leaders had succeeded in the conduct of the party, leaders with whom Sheridan had less friendship and sympathy, and who had thwarted him in his wish to succeed Fox as the representative of Westminster, an honour on which he had set his heart. It was in favour of a young nobleman of no account in the political world that the man who had so long been an ornament to the party, and had in his day done it such manful service, was put aside; and Sheridan would have been more than mortal had he not felt it deeply. The opportunity of avenging himself occurred before long. When the Prince, his patron, finally came to the position of Regent, under many restrictions, and with an almost harsh insistence upon the fact that he held the office not by right, but by the will of Parliament, Sheridan had one moment of triumph—a triumph almost whimsical in its completeness. In the ordinary course of affairs it became the duty of the Lords Grey and Granville, the recognised leaders of the Whig party, which up to this time had been the party specially attached to the Prince, to prepare his reply to the address presented to him by the Houses of Parliament: but the document, when submitted to him, was not to the royal taste. Sheridan, in the meanwhile, who knew all the thoughts of his patron and how to please him, had prepared privately, almost accidentally, according to his own account, a draft of another reply, which the Prince adopted instead, to the astonishment and indignant dismay of

the official leaders, who could scarcely believe in the possibility of such an interference. Moore enters into a lengthened explanation of Sheridan's motives and conduct, supported by his own letters and statements, of which there are so many that it is very apparent he was himself conscious of much necessity for explanation. The great Whig Lords, who thus found themselves superseded, made an indignant remonstrance; but the mischief was done. In the point of view of party allegiance, the proceeding was indefensible; and yet we cannot but think the reader will feel a certain sympathy with Sheridan in this sudden turning of the tables upon the men who had slighted him and ignored his claims. They were new men, less experienced than himself, and the dangerous gratification of showing that, in spite of all they might do, he had still the power to forestal and defeat them, must have been a very strong temptation. But such gratifications are of a fatal kind. Sheridan himself, even at the moment of enjoying it, must have been aware of the perilous step he was taking. And it is another proof of the curious mixture of capacity for business and labour which existed in him along with the most reckless indolence and forgetfulness, that the literature of this incident is so abundant; and that, what with drafts prepared for the Prince's consideration, and letters and documents of State corrected for his adoption, and all the explanatory addresses on his own account which Sheridan thought necessary, he was as fully employed at this crisis as if he had been a Secretary of State.

This or anything like it he was not, however, fated to be. A humbler appointment, that of Chief Secretary under the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, had been designed

for him had the Whig party, as they anticipated, come into office; although, after the mortification to which Sheridan had subjected his noble chiefs, even such an expedient of getting honourably rid of him might have been more than their magnanimity was equal to. But these expectations faded as soon as the Regent was firmly established in his place. The Prince, as is well known, pursued the course common to heirs on their accession, and flung over the party of Opposition to which he had previously attached himself. The Whigs were left in the lurch, and their political opponents continued in power. That Sheridan had a considerable share in bringing this about seems evident: but in punishing them he punished also himself. If he could not serve under them, it was evidently impossible that under the other party he could with any regard to his own honour serve. There is an account in the anonymous biography to which reference has been made, of an attempt on the part of the Prince to induce Sheridan to follow himself in his change of politics; but this has an apocryphal aspect, as the report of a private conversation between two persons, neither very likely to repeat it, always has. It is added that, after Sheridan's refusal, he saw no more of his royal patron. Anyhow it would seem that the intercourse between them failed after this point. The brilliant instrument had done its service, and was no longer wanted. To please his Prince, and perhaps to avenge himself, he had broken his allegiance to his party, and henceforward neither they whom he had thus deserted, nor he for whom he had deserted them, had any place or occasion for him. He continued to appear fitfully in his place in Parliament for some time after,

and one of his latest speeches gives expression to his views on the subject of Catholic Emancipation. Sheridan's nationality could be little more than nominal, yet his interest in Irish affairs had always been great, and he had invariably supported the cause of that troubled country in all emergencies. In this speech, which was one of the last expressions of his opinions on an Irish subject, he maintains that the good treatment of the Catholics was "essential to the safety of this empire."

"I will never give my vote to any administration that opposes the question of Catholic Emancipation. I will not consent to receive a furlough upon that particular question, even though a ministry were carrying every other I wished. In fine, I think the situation of Ireland a permanent consideration. If they were to be the last words I should ever utter in this House, I should say, 'Be just to Ireland as you value your own honour: be just to Ireland as you value your own peace.'"

In this point at least he showed true discernment, and was no false prophet.

The last stroke of evil fortune had, however, fallen upon Sheridan several years before the conclusion of his parliamentary life, putting what was in reality the finishing touch to his many and long-continued embarrassments. One evening in the early spring in the year 1809 a sudden blaze illuminated the House of Commons in the midst of a debate, lighting up the assembly with so fiery and wild a light that the discussion was interrupted in alarm. Sheridan was present in his place, and when the intimation was made that the blaze came from Drury Lane, and that his new theatre, so lately opened and still scarcely completed,

was the fuel which fed this fire, it must have been a pale countenance indeed upon which that fiery illumination shone; but he had never failed in courage, and this time the thrill of desperation must have moved the man whose ruin was thus accomplished. When some scared member, perhaps with a tender thought for the orator who had once in that place stood so high, proposed the adjournment of the House, Sheridan, with the proud calm which such a highly-strained nature is capable of in great emergencies, was the first to oppose the impulse. "Whatever might be the extent of the calamity," he said, "he hoped it would not interfere with the public business of the country." He left his brother members to debate the war in Spain, while he went forth to witness a catastrophe which made the further conduct of any struggle in his own person an impossibility. Some time later he was found seated in one of the coffee-houses in Covent Garden "swallowing port by the tumblerful," as one witness says. One of the actors, who had been looking on at the scene of destruction, made an indignant and astonished outcry at sight of him, when Sheridan, looking up with the wild gaiety of despair and that melancholy humour which so often lights up a brave man's ruin, replied: "Surely a man may be allowed to take a glass of wine by his own fireside." The blaze which shone upon these melancholy potations consumed everything he had to look to in the world. He was still full of power to enjoy, a man not old in years, and of the temperament which never grows old: but he must have seen everything that made life possible flying from him in those thick coiling wreaths of smoke. There was still his parliamentary life and his Prince's favour to fall

back upon, but probably in that dark hour his better judgment showed him that everything was lost.

After the moment of disaster, however, Sheridan's buoyant nature and that keen speculative faculty which would seem to have been so strong in him, awoke with all the fervour of the rebound from despair, as he began to see a new hope. In a letter addressed to Mr. Whitbread, written soon after the fire, and with the high compliment that he considered Whitbread "the man living in my estimation the most disposed and the most competent to bestow a portion of your time and ability to assist the call of friendship," he thus appeals to his kindness :—

"You said some time since, in my house, but in a careless conversation only, that you would be a member of a committee for rebuilding Drury Lane Theatre if it would serve me ; and indeed you very kindly suggested yourself that there were more persons to assist that object than I was aware of. I most thankfully accept the offer of your interference, and am convinced of the benefits your friendly exertions are competent to produce. I have worked the whole subject in my own mind, and see a clear way to retrieve a great property, at least to my son and his family, if my plan meets the support I hope it will appear to merit.

"Writing this to you in the sincerity of private friendship and the reliance I place on my opinion of your character, I need not ask of you, though eager and active in politics as you are, not to be severe in criticising my palpable neglect of all Parliamentary duty. It would not be easy to explain to you, or even to make you comprehend, or any one in prosperous and affluent plight, the private difficulties I have to struggle with. My mind and the resolute independence belonging to it has not been in the least subdued by the late calamity ; but the consequences arising from it have more engaged and embarrassed me than perhaps I have been willing to allow. It has been a principle of my life, persevered in

through great difficulties, never to borrow money of a private friend: and this resolution I would starve rather than violate. When I ask you to take part in this settlement of my shattered affairs, I ask you only to do so after a previous investigation of every part of the past circumstances which relate to the truth. I wish you to accept in conjunction with those who wish to serve me, and to whom I think you would not object. I may be again seized with an illness as alarming as that I lately experienced. Assist me in relieving my mind from the greatest affliction that such a situation can again produce—the fear of others suffering by my death."

Sheridan's proposal was that the theatre should be rebuilt by subscription by a committee under the chairmanship of Whitbread, he himself and his son receiving from them an equivalent in money for their share of the property under the patent. This was done accordingly: Sheridan's share amounted to £24,000, while his son got the half of that sum. But the money which was to take the place of the income which Sheridan had so long drawn from the theatre, was, it is needless to say, utterly inadequate; and was engulfed almost immediately by payments. Indeed the force of circumstances and his necessities compelled him to use it as he might have used a sum independent of his regular income which had fallen into his hand. Whitbread was not to be dealt with now as had been the world in general in Sheridan's brighter days. "He was perhaps," says Moore, "the only person whom Sheridan had ever found proof against his powers of persuasion;" and as in the long labyrinth of engagements which Sheridan no more expected to be held closely to than he would himself have held to a bargain, he had undertaken to wait for his money until the theatre was rebuilt, there were endless

controversies and struggles over every demand he made: and they were many. Sheridan had pledged himself also to non-interference, to "have no concern or connection of any kind whatever with the new undertaking," with as little idea of being held to the pledge: and when his criticisms upon the plans, and attempts to alter them, were repulsed, and the promises he had made recalled to his memory, his indignation knew no bounds. "There cannot exist in England," he cries, "an individual so presumptuous or so void of common sense as not sincerely to solicit the aid of my practical experience on this occasion even were I not in justice to the subscribers bound to offer it." In short it is evident that he never had faced the position at all, but expected to remain to some extent at the head of affairs as of old, and with an inexhaustible treasury to draw upon, although he had formally renounced all claim upon either. When he wrote indignantly to Whitbread as to an advance of £2000 which had been refused to him, and of which he declared that "this and this alone lost me my election" (to Stafford, whither he had returned after his failure at Westminster), Whitbread replied in a letter which paints the condition of the unfortunate man beset by creditors with the most pitiful distinctness.

"You will recollect the £5000 pledged to Peter Moore to answer demands: the certificates given to Giblet, Ker, Iremonger, Cross, and Hirdle, five each at your request: the engagements given to Ettes and myself, and the arrears to the Linley family. All this taken into consideration will leave a large balance still payable to you. Still there are upon that balance the claims upon you of Shaw, Taylor, and Grubb, for all of which you have offered to leave the whole of your compensation in my hand to abide the issue of arbitration."

Poor Sheridan! he had meant to eat his cake yet have it, as is so common. In his wonderful life of shifts and chances he had managed to do so again and again. But the moment had come when it was no more practicable, and neither persuasion nor threats nor indignation could move the stern man of business to whom he had so lately appealed as the man of all others most likely to help and succour. He was so deeply wounded by the management of the new building and all its arrangements that he would not permit his wife to accept the box which had been offered for her use by the committee, and it was a long time before he could be persuaded so much as to enter the theatre with which his whole life had been connected. It was for the opening of this new Drury Lane that the competition of Opening Addresses was called for by the new proprietors, which has been made memorable by the "Rejected Addresses" of Horace and James Smith, one of the few burlesques which have taken a prominent place in literature. It was a tradesman-like idea to propose such a competition to English poets, and the reader will willingly excuse the touch of bitterness in Sheridan's witty description of the Ode contributed by Whitbread himself, which, like most of the addresses, "turned chiefly on allusions to the Phœnix." "But Whitbread made more of the bird than any of them," Sheridan said; "he entered into particulars and described its wings, beak, tail, etc.: in short it was a poulterer's description."

It was while he was involved in these painful controversies and struggles that Sheridan lost his seat in Parliament. This was the finishing blow. His person, so long as he was a member of Parliament, was at least

safe. He could not be arrested for debt; everything else that could be done had been attempted, but this last indignity was impossible. Now, however, that safeguard was removed: and for this among other reasons his exclusion from Parliament was to Sheridan the end of all things. His *prestige* was gone, his power over. It would seem to be certain that the Prince of Wales offered to bring him in for a government borough: but Sheridan had not fallen so low as that. Once out of Parliament, however, the old lion was important to nobody. He could neither help to pass a measure nor bring his eloquence to the task of smothering one. He was powerless henceforward in State intrigues, neither good to veil a prince's designs nor to aid a party movement. And besides he was a poor broken-down dissipated old man, a character meriting no respect, and for whom pity itself took a disdainful tone. He had not been less self-indulgent when the world vied in admiration and applause of him: but all his triumphs had now passed away, and what had been but the gay excess of an exuberant life became the disgraceful habit of a broken man. His debts, which had been evaded and put out of sight so often, sprang up around him no more to be eluded. Once he was actually arrested and imprisoned in a sponging-house for two or three days, a misery and shame which fairly overcame the fortitude of the worn-out and fallen spirit. "On his return home," Moore tells us (some arrangements having been made by Whitbread for his release), "all his fortitude forsook him, and he burst into a long and passionate fit of weeping at the profanation, as he termed it, which his person had suffered." Leigh Hunt, in his flashy and frothy article,

has some severe remarks upon this exhibition of feeling, but few people will wonder at it. Sheridan had been proud in his way, he had carried his head high. His own great gifts had won him a position almost unparalleled; he had been justified over and over again in the fond faith that by some happy chance, some half miraculous effort, his fortunes might still be righted and all go well. Alas! all this was over, hope and possibility were alike gone. Like a man running a desperate race, half stupefied in the rush of haste and weariness, of trembling limbs and panting bosom, whose final stumble overwhelms him with the passion of weakness, here was the point in which every horror culminated and every power broke down. The sanguine foolish bravery of the man was such even then, that next moment he was calculating upon the possibility of re-election for Westminster, a seat which was one of the prizes sought by favourites of fortune; and, writing to his solicitor after his personal possessions, pictures, books, and nicknacks had been sacrificed, comforted him with a cheerful "However, we shall come through!"

Poor Sheridan! the heart bleeds to contemplate him in all his desperate shifts, now maudlin in tears, now wild in foolish gaiety and hope. Prince and party alike left him to sink or swim as he pleased. When it was told him that young Byron, the new hero of society, had praised him as the writer of the best comedy, the best opera, the best oration of his time, the veteran burst into tears. A compliment now was an unwonted delight to one who had received the plaudits of two generations, and who had moved men's minds as few besides had been able to do. A little band of friends,

very few and of no great renown, were steadfast to him, Peter Moore, M.P. for Coventry, Samuel Rogers, his physician Dr. Bain, he who had attended the deathbed of Mrs. Sheridan, stood by him faithfully through all; but he passed through the difficulties of his later years, and descended into the valley of the shadow of death, deserted, but for them, by all who had professed friendship for him. Lord Holland, indeed, is said to have visited him once, and the Duke of Kent wrote him a polite regretful letter when he announced his inability to attend a meeting; but not even an inquiry came from Carlton House, and all the statesmen whom he had offended, and those to whom he had long been so faithful a colleague, deserted him unanimously. When the troubles of his later life culminated in illness, a more forlorn being did not exist. He had worn out his excellent constitution with hard living and continual excesses. Oceans of potent port had exhausted his digestive organs; he had no longer either the elasticity of youth to endure, or its hopeful prospects to bear him up. He was, indeed, still cheerful, sanguine, full of plans and new ideas for "getting through," till the very end. But this had long been a matter beyond hope. His last days were harassed by all the miseries of poverty — nay, by what is worse, the miseries of indebtedness. That he should starve was impossible: but he had worse to bear, he had to encounter the importunities of creditors whom he could not pay, some at least of whom were perhaps as much to be pitied as himself. He was not safe night nor day from the assaults of the exasperated or despairing. "Writs and executions came in rapid succession, and bailiffs at length gained possession of his

house." That house was denuded of everything that would sell in it, and the chamber in which he lay dying was threatened, and in one instance at least invaded by sheriffs' officers, who would have carried him off wrapped in his blankets had not Dr. Bain interfered, and warned them that his life was at stake. One evening Rogers, on returning home late at night, found a despairing appeal on his table. "I find things settled so that £150 will remove all difficulty; I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the plays successfully in the course of a week, when all shall be returned. They are going to put the carpets out of the window and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take* me. For God's sake let me see you." Moore was with Rogers and vouches for this piteous demand on his own authority. The two poets turned out after midnight to Sheridan's house, and spoke over the area rails to a servant, who assured them that all was safe for the night. Miserable crisis so often repeated! In the morning the money was sent by the hands of Moore, who gives this last description of the unfortunate and forsaken—

> "I found Mr. Sheridan good-natured and cordial, and though he was then within a few weeks of his death, his voice had not lost its fulness or strength, nor was that lustre for which his eyes were so remarkable diminished. He showed too his usual sanguineness of disposition in speaking of the price he expected for his dramatic works, and of the certainty he felt of being able to manage all his affairs if his complaint would but suffer him to leave his bed."

Moore adds with natural indignation, that during the whole of his lingering illness, "it does not appear that

any one of his noble or royal friends ever called at his door, or even sent to inquire after him."

At last the end came. When the Bishop of London, sent for by Mrs. Sheridan, came to visit the dying man, she told Mr. Smyth that such a paleness of awe came over his face as she could never forget. He had never taken time or thought for the unseen, and the appearance of the priest, like a forerunner of death itself, stunned and startled the man, whose life had been occupied with far other subjects. But he was not one to avoid any of the decent and becoming preliminaries that custom had made indispensable—nay, there was so much susceptibility to emotion in him, that no doubt he was able to find comfort in the observances of a death-bed, even though his mind was little accustomed to religious thought or observance. Nothing more squalid, more miserable and painful, than the state of his house outside of the sick chamber could be. When Smyth arrived in loyal friendship and pity to see his old patron, he found the desecrated place in possession of bailiffs, and everything in the chill disorder which such a miserable invasion produces. Poor Mrs. Sheridan, meeting him with a kind of sprightly despair, suggested that he must want food after his journey. "I daresay you think there is nothing to be had in such a house; but we are not so bad as that," she cried. The shocked and sympathetic visitor had little heart to eat, as may be supposed, and he was profoundly moved by the description of that pale awe with which Sheridan had resigned himself to the immediate prospect of death.

In the meantime, some one outside, possibly Moore himself, though he does not say so, had written a letter

to the *Morning Post*, calling attention to the utter desertion in which Sheridan had been left.

"Oh delay not," said the writer, without naming the person to whom he alluded (we quote from Moore), "delay not to draw aside the curtain within which that proud spirit hides its sufferings." He then adds, with a striking anticipation of what afterwards happened, "Prefer ministering in the chamber of sickness to mustering at

"The splendid sorrows that adorn the hearse.

"I say *life* and *succour* against Westminster Abbey and a funeral. This article" (Moore continues) "produced a strong and general impression, and was reprinted in the same paper the following day."

So unusual a fact proves the interest which Sheridan still called forth in the public mind. It had so much effect that various high-sounding names were heard again at Sheridan's door among the hangers-on of the law and the disturbed and terrified servants, who did not know when an attempt might be made upon their master's person, dying or dead. The card even of the Duke of York, the inquiries of peers or wealthy commoners, to whom it would have been so easy to conjure all Sheridan's assailants away, could no longer help or harm him. After a period of unconsciousness, on a Sunday in July, in the height of summer and sunshine, this great ministrant to the amusement of the world, this orator who had swayed them with his breath, died like the holder of a besieged castle, safe only in the inmost citadel, beset with eager foes all ready to rush in, and faithful servants glad that he should hasten out of the world and escape the last indignity. Among the many lessons of the vicissitudes of life with which we are all

familiar, there never was any more effective. It is like one of the strained effects of the stage, to which Sheridan's early reputation belonged; and like a curious repetition of his early and sudden fame, or rather like the scornful commentary upon it of some devilish cynic permitted for the moment to scoff at mankind, is the apotheosis of his conclusion. The man who was hustled into his coffin to escape the touch which he had dreaded so much in life, that profanation of his person which had moved him to tears—and hastily carried forth in the night to the shelter of his friend's house that he might not be arrested, dead—was no sooner covered with the funeral pall than dukes and princes volunteered to bear it. Two royal highnesses, half the dukes and earls and barons of the peerage, followed him in the guise of mourning to Westminster Abbey, where among the greatest names of English literature, in the most solemn and splendid shrine of national honour, this spendthrift of genius, this prodigal of fame, was laid for the first time in all his uneasy being to secure and certain rest. He had been born in obscurity — he died in misery. Out of the humblest unprovided unendowed poverty, he had blazed into reputation, into all the results of great wealth, if never to its substance; more wonderful still, he had risen to public importance and splendour, and his name can never be obliterated from the page of history; but had fallen again, down, down, into desertion, misery, and the deepest degradation of a poverty for which there was neither hope nor help: till death wiped out all possibilities of further trouble or embarrassment, and Sheridan became once more in his coffin the great man whom his party

delighted to honour—a national name and credit, one of those whose glory illustrates our annals. It may be permitted now to doubt whether these last mournful honours were not more than his real services to England deserved; but at the moment it was no doubt a fine thing that the poor hopeless Sherry whom everybody admired and despised, whom no one but a few faithful friends would risk the trouble of helping, who had sunk away out of all knowledge into endless debts, and duns, and drink, should rise in an instant as soon as death had stilled his troubles into the Right Honourable, brilliant, and splendid Sheridan, whose enchanter's wand the stubborn Pitt had bowed under, and the noble Burke acknowledged with enthusiasm. It was a fine thing; but the finest thing was that death, which in England makes all glory possible, and which restores to the troublesome bankrupt, the unfortunate prodigal, and all stray sons of fame, at one stroke, their friends, their reputation, and the abundant tribute which it might have been dangerous to afford them living, but with which it is both safe and prudent to glorify their tomb. So Scotland did to Burns, letting him suffer all the tortures of a proud spirit for want of a ten-pound note, but sending a useless train of local gentry to attend him to his grave—and so the Whig Peers and potentates did to Sheridan, who had been their equal and companion. Such things repeat themselves in the history of the generations, but no one takes the lesson, though every one comments upon it. Men of letters have ceased, to a great extent, to be improvident and spendthrifts, and seldom require to be picked out of ruin by their friends and disciples in these days; but who can doubt

that were there another Sheridan amongst us his fate would be the same?

It has to be added, however, that had the great people who did nothing for him stepped in to relieve Sheridan and prolong his life, nothing is more probable than that the process would have had to be repeated from time to time, as was done for Lamartine in France, since men do not learn economy, or the wise use of their means, after a long life of reckless profusion. But he had gained nothing by his political career, in which most of the politicians of the time gained so much, and it is said that his liabilities came to no more than £4000, for which sum surely it was not meet to suffer such a man to be hunted to his grave by clamorous creditors, however just their claim or natural their exasperation. Somebody said in natural enthusiasm, when it was announced that the author of *Waverley* was overwhelmed with debts, "Let every one to whom he has given pleasure give him sixpence, and he will be the richest man in Europe." Yes! but the saying remained a very pretty piece of good nature and pleasing appreciation, no one attempting to carry its suggestion out. Sir Walter would have accepted no public charity, but a public offering on such a grand scale, had it ever been offered, would not have shamed the proudest. These things are easy to say; the doing only fails in our practical British race with a curious consistency. It is well that every man should learn that his own exertions are his only trust; but when that is said it is not all that there should be to say.

"Where were they these royal and noble persons" (Moore cries with natural fervour of indignation) "who now crowded

to 'partake the yoke' of Sheridan's glory; where were they all while any life remained in him? Where were they all but a few weeks before when their interposition might have saved his heart from breaking? or when the zeal now wasted on the grave might have soothed and comforted the deathbed? This is a subject on which it is difficult to speak with patience. If the man was unworthy of the commonest offices of humanity while he lived, why all this parade of regret and homage over his tomb?"

And he adds the following verses which "appeared," he says, "at the time, and however intemperate in their satire and careless in their style, came evidently warm from the breast of the writer" (himself)—

"Oh, it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And friendships so false in the great and highborn;
To think what a long line of titles may follow,
The relics of him who died friendless and lorn.

"How proud they can press to the funeral array,
Of him whom they shunned in his sickness and sorrow;
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow."

When all these details which move the heart out of the composedness of criticism are put aside, we scarcely feel ourselves in a position to echo the lavish praises which have been showered upon Sheridan. He was no conscientious workman labouring his field, but an abrupt and hasty wayfarer snatching at the golden apples where they grew, and content with one violent abundance of harvesting. He had no sooner gained the highest successes which the theatre could give than he abandoned that scene of triumph for a greater one; and when—on that more glorious stage—he had produced one of the

most striking sensations known to English political life, his interest in that also waned, and a broken occasional effort now and then only served to show what he might have accomplished had it been continuous. If he had been free of the vices that pulled him to earth, and possessed of the industry and persistency which were not in his nature, he would, with scarcely any doubt, have left both fortune and rank to his descendants. As it was in everything he did, he but scratched the soil. Those who believe that the conditions under which a man does his work, are those which are best adapted to his genius, will comfort themselves that there was nothing beyond this fertile surface, soon exhausted and capable of but one overflowing crop and no more, and there is a completeness and want of suggestion in his literary work which favours this idea. But the other features of his life are equally paradoxical and extraordinary; the remarkable financial operations which must have formed the foundation of his career were combined with the utmost practical deficiency in the same sphere; and his faculty for business, for negotiation, explanation, copious letter-writing, and statement of opinion, contrast as strangely with the absolute indolence which seems to have distinguished his life. He could conjure great sums of money out of nothing, out of vacancy, to buy his theatre, and set himself up in a lavish and prodigal life; but he could not keep his private affairs out of the most hopeless confusion. He could arrange the terms of a Regency and outwit a party; but he could not read, much less reply to, the letters addressed to him, or keep any sort of order in the private business on his hands. Finally, and perhaps most extraordinary of all, he could give in

the *Critic* the deathblow to false tragedy, then write the bombast of Rolla, and prepare *Pizarro* for the stage. Through all these contradictions Sheridan blazed and exploded from side to side in a reckless yet rigid course, like a gigantic and splendid piece of firework, his follies repeating themselves, his inability to follow up success, and careless abandonment of one way after another that might have led to a better and happier fortune. He had a fit of writing, a fit of oratory, but no impulse to keep him in either path long enough to make anything more than the dazzling but evanescent triumph of a day. His harvest was like a southern harvest, over early, while it was yet but May; but he sowed no seed for a second ingathering, nor was there any growth or richness left in the soon-exhausted soil.

Sheridan's death took place on the 7th July 1816, when he was nearly sixty-five, after more than thirty years of active political life. His boyish reputation, won before this began, has outlasted all that high place, extraordinary opportunity, and not less extraordinary success, could do for his name and fame.

THE END

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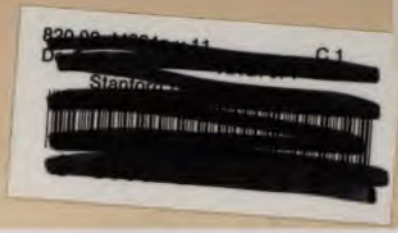

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